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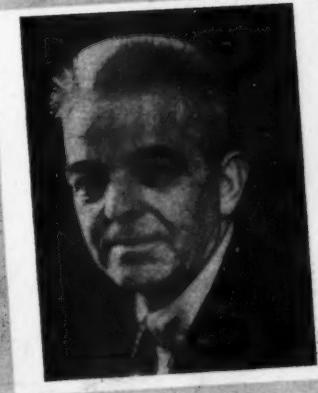
The American RECORD GUIDE



January, 1955
Volume 21, No. 5



OEDIPUS and
PLECTRA & PERCUSSION
DANCES
by HARRY PARTCH



THIRTY-FIVE CENTS



BALES: *The Confederacy*; Florence Kopfleff (mezzo-soprano), Thomas Pyle (baritone), Cantata Choir of the Lutheran Church of Reformation, Washington, D. C., National Gallery Orchestra, Richard Bales (conductor). Columbia SL-220, \$10.00.

AMONG the fascinating items to arrive too late in December for review is this quasi-cantata, arranged by Mr. Bales from music sung and played in the South during the Civil War. It's an entertaining and sometimes moving opus, reminding us of the spirit of Dixie and the tragic ending of the war between the States that cost the South so dearly. I'm hardly a sentimentalist about the South, nor the North either when it comes to the Civil War, but having lived in Tennessee in my childhood on one of the grandest plantations of its time, I find this kaleidoscopic history in sound of the Confederacy both stirring and touching. Hearing an ancestor of Robert E. Lee read the latter's "Farewell Order to the Army of Northern Virginia" reminds me that one of the greatest soldiers of that senseless war might have been president of this country had he been on the winning side.

Having given just reason for my enjoyment of this unique memorabilia—incidentally in company with my staunch Northern wife, who was equally fascinated—let me get down to the business of the program, the copious notes and the wonderful illustrations. This is quite an album, excellently planned and carried out by the vision of its producer, Goddard Lieberson. Of course, Mr. Bales conceived the idea. Moreover, he had already presented it in 1953 as a celebration of his tenth year as the National Gallery's music director. But he had not dreamed up the impressive album nor probably, for that matter, his work's perpetuation in a recording. Mr. Bales is a Virginian and close enough to the South to assemble an opus like this.

The Confederacy is divided between gay, martial, and sentimental music. The latter includes some tear-jerkers, which at an earlier date would have had a more personal message to folks below the Mason-Dixon line. Songs like *Lorena* and *Somebody's Darling* tugged heavily at the heartstrings long ago; and even today they may well move a lot of listeners. They have some of that touching sentimentality that Stephen Foster in-

(Continued on page 146)

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The American Music Lover

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Cover Picture: Carl Nielsen, whose "Fifth Symphony" is at long last recorded (p. 154).

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•**Peter Hugh Reed**, *Editor & Publisher*. **James Lyons**, *Associate Editor*. **Eugene Bruck**, *Phil Hart*, *C. J. Luten*, *Philip L. Miller*, *James Norwood*, *Anson W. Peckham*, *Max de Schauensee*, *Harold C. Schonberg*, *Contributors*. **Paul Girard**, *Advertising & Circulation*.

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January, 1955

Editorial Notes

News of the sudden industry-wide crisis that has resulted from Victor's unexpected and dramatic price-cut came as this issue was completed for press. To record buyers, it will come as a New Year benediction since other large companies are following in Victor's wake, but to countless dealers across country it may prove to be an unforeseen calamity that retards their immediate appraisals of a New Year's promised blessings.

Whether or not the move will turn out to be a tempest in a teapot or have profound ramifications, it is too early to say. As we write this copy, developments are coming so fast from many quarters that it would be impracticable to attempt a reasoned appraisal at this juncture. Superficially considered, the balance of the bargain may turn out to be in favor of the consumer, but the independent dealer faces a serious situation indeed, what with the depreciation of his current inventories, which may or may not permit him to expand further at the more reasonable wholesale prices.

As time goes by, it may become evident that in the record business especially, economics are dependent on human values, and the manufacturers must realize that such a precious commodity, as theirs, is one that may lose something of its value in the impersonal atmosphere of the marketplace. To paraphrase the old saying, *caveat emptor*, let the manufacturers themselves beware of cheapening a worthy product.

* * *

WHEN critics seem to disagree in the same household, so to speak, readers are apt to become confused or even irked. And so it proved, with our recent review (see October issue) of the Scherchen-Riddle performance of Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*. Our policy has always been to present more than one point of view when there were differences of opinion regarding the artistic or reproductive merits of different releases. And, it has always been assumed that the majority of readers

would tie-in with the reviewer that substantiates their reactions, if not opinions.

So, J.N. thinks that the Scherchen-Riddle performance is excellent while P.H.R. still thinks the Beecham-Primrose one is a better performance. Actually, the overall excellence of the Scherchen-Riddle lies in its reproduction, for the heavy reverberation of the Beecham-Primrose is a disfavor to the overall clarity of Berlioz's music, especially on the bass end. Where is the Beecham-Primrose excels is in the fluency and refinement of the conductor's work—albeit at times somewhat mannered, especially in the *March of the Pilgrims* which, though taken at the right tempo, is given a spriteliness not wholly in keeping with its implied religious spirit. There is also the superb musicianship of Primrose, who is heard to better advantage than in his previous recording with Koussevitzky. Scherchen's treatment of this score tends to be more stolid, it is not as heavy-handed as his treatment of the *Symphonie fantastique*. While "the over-all sound of the *Finale*" is one of the most amazing things in the recent history of the phonographic art" in the Scherchen version, sound is not a substitute for musical continuity in action or spirit. Your editor prefers to live with the Primrose-Beecham performance.

The Confederacy

(continued from front cover)

dulged in, striking a universal note that may never be quelled. The cantata opens with *Gen. Lee's Grand March* and ends with *Dixie's Land* and the famous Rebel Yell—a rousing beginning and ending. Bales has chosen his material well—even to the use of the famous Southern parody on *When Johnny comes marching home*.

The performance of this unusual work has been effectively achieved. The singers are quite good and the church choir enters into the spirit, and Mr. Bales who usually tends to be somewhat conservative lets down his hair, and

the orchestra respond with spirit. I would have preferred singers and chorus who came from the deep South and had a true drawl, but the present group sing with conviction. The recording is generally excellent, though the choir strangely seems a bit distant at times and then quite in the picture.

Besides the impressive photographs in the album, there are fine essays by Bruce Catton on *The Confederate Legend* and Clifford Dowdey on *Lee at Appomattox*. I'm told the album is selling from Maine to Alabama, and well it may. Also, I'm told, Mr. Bales is contemplating a similar work to be entitled *The Union*.

—P.H.R.

VERDI'S REQUIEM

VERDI: *Requiem Mass*; Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Orlalia Dominez, Giuseppe Di Stefano, Cesare Siepi, Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala conducted by Victor de Sabata. Angel set 3520B, 2 discs, \$11.90. **THE SAME:** Maria Stader, Marianna Radev, Helmut Krebs, Kim Borg, Choir of St. Hedwig's Cathedral, RIAS Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Ferenc Fricsay. Decca set DX-118, 2 discs, \$11.90.

IT MAY seem strange to some that Verdi's *Requiem*, the beloved possession of the Italians, should be performed in a more compassionate manner by a Hungarian conductor than by two famous Italian interpreters which proves as convincing an interpretation has come to records. I have already voiced my disappointment over the Toscanini performance in which, despite the wonderful orchestral direction and the remarkable reproduction considering its period, the singing is not completely satisfying.

The reproduction of the Angel version has more reality in dynamics, but the imbalance between the voices and the orchestra is inexcusable in these days. Where Toscanini achieves telling dramatic effects, de Sabata with his exaggerated dynamics produces melodramatic effects—

The American Record Guide

his treatment of the *Dies Irae* becomes almost *brutale*, as the Italians say, and the quality of the singing suffers as a result. The gifted Miss Schwarzkopf, who can float her voice as all too few sopranos of today, sings for the most part with splendid artistry though often she seems to be unduly pushing her high tones with resultant loss of quality. The contralto, Oralia Dominguez, possesses a beautiful voice and her artistry is of a high order. Her *Liber scriptus* is superbly accomplished. Mr. Di Stefano is in better voice than in the Toscanini set, though he tends to sing too loudly. Mr. Siepi is once again wholly admirable in his part.

Devotional in Spirit

The recording of the Decca set is excellent, with proper balance. Mr. Fricsay does not stress drama but makes this extraordinarily imaginative work devotional in spirit. As one friend of mine says, "he puts heart into a score that sprang from its creator's heart." His four soloists are gifted artists. Maria Stader's voice is not a large one, but her beauty of tone and artistry are gratifying. Marianna Radev also possesses a lovely contralto voice, and she sings with expressive feeling. Helmut Krebs also sings with feeling, modulating his tones as indicated by the composer. He recalls Gigli in sound, whose operatic exaggerations he wisely avoids. Kim Borg with his richly mellow bass, brings dignity to his part. The choral singing in this set is less fervent than in the Angel one, but the overall effect is nonetheless impressive, for the devotional spirit of the conductor has been absorbed by all involved in the performance. The RIAS Symphony, one of the best orchestras on the Continent, do justice to the occasion. The listener who has not acquired a performance of this work is enjoined to hear all three and decide which sustains his interest the most. There may be some who will share the gratitude that this reporter feels toward Fricsay for remembering the devotional aspect of the *Requiem Mass* and retrieving it from the shadow of the opera house.

—P.H.R.

Additional Critic's Choice of the Best LPs of 1954

OPERA

BEETHOVEN: *Fidelio*; Peerce, Bampton, Jansen, Steber, etc., Chorus, NBC Sym. Orch. (Toscanini). Victor set LM-6025. (Dec.).
BELLINI: *Norma*; Callas, Stignani, Filippeschi, Rossi-Lemeni, etc., Orch. & Cho. of La Scala (Serafin). Angel set 3517C. (Dec.).

ORCHESTRA

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 58*; Curzon, Knappertsbusch, Vienna Phil. Orch. London LL-1045. (Dec.).
FRANCK: *Symphony in D mi.; Le Chasseur maudit*; Vienna State Opera Orch. (Rodzinski). (Dec.).
GLAZUNOV: *Stenka Rasin, Op. 13* (see Rimsky-K. *Antar*).
HINDEMITH: *Der Schwanendreher* (see Walton *Concerto*).
Mozart: *Four Horn Concertos*; Dennis Brain, Philharmonic Orch. (von Karajan). Angel 35092. (Dec.).
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Antar, Op. 9*; **GLAZUNOV:** *Stenka Rasin, Op. 13*; Ansermet & Swiss Romande Orch. London LL-1060. (Dec.).
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Scheherazade, Op. 35*; Ormandy & Phila. Orch. Columbia ML-4888. (Dec.).
SHOSTAKOVICH: *Symphony No. 10, Op. 93*; Mitropoulos & Phil. Sym. Orch. of N. Y. Columbia ML-4959. (Dec.).
STRAUSS: *Ein Heldenleben, Op. 40*; Reiner & Chicago Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1807. Also Ormandy & Phila. Orch. Columbia ML-4887. (Dec.).
STRAVINSKY: *Dances Concertantes*; *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto*; *Concertino*; *Three Pieces for String Quartet*; Rochester Phil. Orch. (Hull) and Gordon String Quartet. Concert Hall 1229. (Dec.).

VIVALDI: *La Stravaganza, Op. 4*; Barchet (violin), Pro Musica String Orch. (Reinhardt). Vox set DL-103. (June).

WALTON: *Viola Concerto*; **HINDEMITH:** *Der Schwanendreher*; Wm. Primrose (viola), Sargent & Royal Phil. Orch. and Pritchard & Col. Cham Orch. Columbia ML-4905. (Dec.)

KEYBOARD

BACH: *Well-Tempered Clavier* (completion); Wanda Landowska. Victor LM-1820. (Dec.).
CHOPIN: *25 Etudes, Op. 10 & Op. 25*; Alexander Uninsky. Epic LC3065. (Dec.).

VOICE

- BACH:** *Cantata No. 51; Cantata No. 202*; Suzanne Danco, with Stuttgart Cham. Orch. (Muenchinger), London LL-993. (Dec.).
- BRITTEN:** *Serenade for Tenor, Horn & Strings, Op. 31; Les Illuminations, Op. 18*; Peter Pears, Dennis Brain, New Sym. Orch. (Goossens). London LL-994. (Dec.).
- BYRD:** *Four Part Mass; Five Part Mass*; Pro Musica Antiqua (Cape). EMS 234. (Dec.).
- FERRIER, Kathleen:** *A Broadcast Recital*. London 10" LS-1032. (Dec.).
- SCHUBERT:** *Die schoene Muellerin, Op. 25*; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau & Gerald Moore. HMV ALP-1036/37. (Dec.).

Prokofiev's Prodigal Son

PROKOFIEV: *Symphony No. 4 in C, Op. 47; Suite from The Prodigal Son, Op. 46; L'Orchestre des Concerts Colonne* conducted by George Sebastian. Urania LP disc URLP-7139, \$5.95.

▲IN the history of the ballet theater, there are only a handful of great dramatic works. Among those that are available to us today, one—by anybody's standards—must be the Prokofiev-Balanchine-Rouault *Prodigal Son*. An authentic masterpiece, this ballet is one of the jewels in the diadem that is the repertory of the New York City Ballet Company. Those familiar with this production will be as astonished as your reviewer was to discover about half of its music in three of the four movements of Prokofiev's *Fourth*, here recorded for the first time.

Not knowing the full history of how *Prodigal Son*, the *Symphony No. 4*, and the *Suite from the Prodigal Son* came to be, I turned to George Balanchine, artistic director of the New York City Ballet Company, to ask for background information. *Prodigal Son*, he told me, was the last of the Diaghilev company's new productions; it had its *premiere* in Paris in 1929. The work was beset almost from its inception by differences between Prokofiev and Balanchine. The composer envisioned a realistic work, the choreographer a Russian comment à la Mousorgsky on the famous Biblical tale. And once the work was mounted, the critics complained of the lack of an appropriate

religious viewpoint. The work had been given only a few times when Diaghilev died, and soon thereafter his company disintegrated. Meanwhile, Prokofiev had received a commission from Serge Koussevitzky for a major work for the 1930 Boston Symphony Orchestra festival. Since few knew *Prodigal Son*, Prokofiev, perhaps pressed for time, drew from his complete ballet score to complete his *Symphony No. 4* for Koussevitzky. Later, in 1931, Prokofiev arranged a suite from *Prodigal Son* for a concert in Paris. This was an extensive re-disposition of the majority of the substance of the score with no relationship to the original ballet continuity.

I have taken the space to explain the relationship of each of these works to the other because, in my view, the *Prodigal Son* score is one of the most powerful, original, and effective in the ballet theater repertory. The ballet's story is similar to that in the Bible except that it does not include the portion relating to the prodigal's elder brother who stays home and is faithful to his father and the land. The final scene of the ballet (this music is virtually identical with the second movement of the *Fourth Symphony*) is one of the most touching episodes Prokofiev bequeathed us. Lost, the prodigal, still on his knees, goes past the gate of his home before he realizes where he is. He retraces his movements. Then there is that moment of agony and joy as he is reconciled with his father.

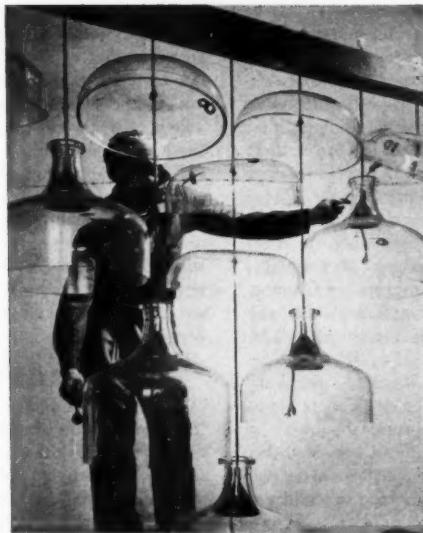
Balanchine believes the complete score for *Prodigal Son* to be Prokofiev's best, and few, I imagine, would argue strongly with him.

Unfortunately, the suite and the *Symphony No. 4* give the listener but a suggestion of what the full ballet score is like. Purchasing the Urania disc—beautifully recorded, by the way, and well interpreted—will simply give the listener an idea of the raw material Prokofiev used to create a masterwork. If Vox does not come through as we expect it will, this disc will be good to have. But truly, it is merely a good-quality substitute for the finished, authoritative ballet score.

—C.J.Luten

The American Record Guide

Mr. Partch and
the Cloud-Cham-
ber Bowls



X

The Music of Harry Partch

SOPHOCLES: *Oedipus* (abbreviated version by Harry Partch and Jordan Churchill); Instrumental Ensemble conducted by Jack Hohensee with Allan Louw (*Oedipus*), Sue Beel Starck (*Jocasta*), Pierce Murphy (Chorus Spokesman) and others. Gate 5 Ensemble set, 2 LP discs, \$12.50.

PARTCH: *Plectra and Percussion Dances*—*Satyr-Play Music for Dance Theatre*; Gate 5 Ensemble conducted by Horace Schwartz with Lynn Ludlow and Allen Louw (voices). Gate 5 Ensemble LP disc, \$7.50. (Box 387, Marin City, Calif.)

▲ RECENTLY my friend Jacques Barzun called my attention to the above discs in a letter in which he said: "To those who know only that Mr. Partch is an American composer living in California and whose works are scored for instruments of his own devising, based on the 43-tone scale, the announcement of a new score by him, *Oedipus*, will perhaps be classed as 'experimentation' and thereby disposed of. To

January, 1955

those, on the contrary, who have followed his career with their ears open, he seems with each new work to deserve a greater place among contemporary artists. He is born musical dramatist and in all his productions, particularly when he himself takes part as a singer, one hears the unmistakable note of power.

"I shall not describe *Oedipus* beyond saying that it is a compact version of the play, admirably spoken and chanted and sung, to accompaniments which defy description in the usual critical jargon. Yet, it takes no special study of or accustoming to the scale in order to be deeply moved."

Mr. Partch not only has evolved an acoustic 43-tone-to-the-octave scale and constructed his own instruments, but has developed an individual philosophy for a "new creative music." This philosophy he has outlined in a book called *Genesis of a Music* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1949). Mr. Partch, in a letter, tells us that he has always been impatient with

hard and fast categories in music, that he cannot believe that music started [he is intensely interested in the way it started] in any pure-theory way, "either the dogmatic music-school way or the dogmatic scientific way, since both would imply that music began with discreet steps, yet there is almost no tonal experience in either nature or primitive man's own usages where straight frequencies and discreet steps are heard. Discreet steps were certainly not in primitive man's language. If glides were deleted from spoken Chinese, which by all odds comes closest of any living language to the discreet step idea, I doubt very much that it would be recognizable at all. Discreet steps were never in man's cries, never in the cries of other mammals, and practically never in the songs of birds. Yet these were his first tonal experiences, and to some degree, they are also ours; we have in addition wailing tugboats, gliding foghorns, weeping train whistles over the desert, and soul-rendering raid sirens. When primitive man began to use reed flutes and to create the conventions of music he got discreet steps (and I can testify that he must have gotten also—with the greatest of ease—gliding tones), but nowhere in the world is the convention of discreet steps so academically rigorous as it is in the West.

The American Drawl

"European languages do not seem to be given to long glides, but the American language is—the 'drawl' that so many people make fun of. I love it, and have tried in all my works where words are involved to make an art of its wonderful subtleties in musical inflection. Frequently, my music takes fairly large forms directly from word patterns. Regarding my multiple tone: My scale is a source scale—that is all. Music of 43 tones occurs seldom—a figure, a very short passage perhaps. Different tonalities generally demand different sets of tones, and I never decide in advance what or how many tones I will use. The second and fourth choruses of *Oedipus* use only nine tones to the octave—in other cases I use only five—not the usual five. A final comment regarding the ear: it is capable

of far more musical expression than has been asked of it. If an organ is sensitive in a certain area, then that area is valid art material, and every violinist ought to realize the sensitive areas that are never touched by art music every time he tunes his instrument."

The initial response of many listeners to Mr. Partch's music is that it is "Oriental," but he claims his music is Western, and few Orientals who have heard his music consider it "Oriental." "The bewilderment of many Orientals is easily equal to that of many Caucasians," says Mr. Partch.

Defies Description

Mr. Barzun is quite right in saying that Mr. Partch's music defies description in the usual critical jargon. His music is an experience in sound effects that are unique and fascinating. In the first place, the instruments devised by this visionary composer are far from the primitive jungle or forest, they have a beauty of tone that cannot be described, only experienced. His "cloud bowls" are soft and almost dulcet in tone, never metallic or harsh. One might call Mr. Partch the poet of musical instrument-makers. Descriptions of them are given on the envelopes of both releases.

His *Oedipus* moved me in a way that no other performance of this drama has ever done. In creating a text version that was simple and direct, he has made the old Greek tragedy more accessible to us. "The conventions of Greek tragic poetry," he says, "can mean nothing to us, but I believe that we can reach its spirit if we feel more, and in a realm beyond knowledge." The cast of his *Oedipus* has admirably entered the portals of an experience that must have been foreign to them at first. Some have absorbed the spirit of the visionary Mr. Partch better than others, but the overall result is laudable. The music to this *Oedipus* is background music, motivated by the rhythm of the text; it adds to rather than distracts from the play.

The *Plectra and Percussion Dances* suggest on first hearing Oriental music—the music of Bali, for example, though

The American Record Guide

comparison Balinese music proves that Mr. Partch has created a far different idiom. There are three works on this latter disc—*Castor and Pollux—A Dance for the Twin Rhythms of Gemini, Ring Around the Moon—A Dance for Here and Now*, and *Even Wild Horses—Dance Music for an Absent Drama*.

The first of these is a highly personalized treatment of a mythological subject in which the intended probatory treatment may seem vague to the listener at first. Separating it from its implied program, however, one can find a strange allure in its unique assessment of unusual instrumental effects and subtle rhythms.

The second, assuredly an oddity among musical satires, might be called an "Inner Sanctum" of satires with the absurd word intrusions that are intended as "an odd kind of shock." Here the musical satire is "on the world of singers and singing, music and dance; on concerts and concert audiences . . . also a satire on the world in general, on whimsy and caprice, on music in 43 tones to the octave, on people who conceive such things, on grand flourishes that lead to nothing, on satyrs, or on nothing." A composer who can spoof himself is a rare individual, but once again I find the attraction on first acquaintance is in the musical effects rather than the spoken words which prove an intrusion in an otherwise subtle satirical intent.

"Even Wild Horses"

The third dance is a more imaginative work, albeit somewhat bewildering at first hearing but beguiling nonetheless in its subtle and cute rhythmic patterns, its complex instrumental sounds, its spoken and chanted words and its wily defiance of any recognized musical law or order. The use of English and French words, the latter selected from that abstruse poet Rimbaud, lends a touch of satirical impressionism that is aimed at a rebuke to so-called "cultivated Americans and Englishmen," who favor sophistication regardless of the relevancy of words. That these works smack of chicanery there can be little question of a doubt, but this should not be implied as an uncomplimentary observation. Mr. Partch is an in-

dividual in a world that moves in more widely recognized patterns of lawfulness. That he has developed an individual philosophy "for a creative music" cannot be denied; however, one wonders whether that "individual philosophy" will be rightly understood or appreciated by many. Suffice it say, Mr. Partch's conjured tonal effects and sliding scales retain an exotic flavor that nonetheless may remain intriguing to many listeners. In many ways, his is an adventure in euphonious sounds that are not motivated by the hi-fi craze, which brings us to the question of reproduction—in both records the engineering has been excellently contrived, with fine balance and clarity that sustain an illusion of realism. In the three dances several excerpts have been "deleted as a sacrificial offering to the jealous gods of technology."

—P.H.R.

Roland Hayes Sings

SIX CENTURIES OF SONG—Vol. I:

Douce Dame jolie (Marchaut); *L'Amour de moi* (arr. Tiersot); *Le Tambourin* (arr. Tiersot); *Maledetto sia l'aspetto* (Monteverdi); *Amarilli* (Caccini); *Alma del core* (Caldara); *Alone I Live* (15th-Century English Song); *Mein Freud moecht sich wol mehrern* (15th Century); *Die Rechte Stimmung, Aria* (Telemann); *Bist du bei mir* (Bach); *Xango* (African Religious Chant, arr. Villa-Lobos); *Lil' Girl! Yes, Mam!* (Aframerican "Catch," arr. Hayes); *Roun' About de Mountain* (arr. Hayes); *Lil' Boy (Christ in the Temple)* (arr. Hayes); *He never said a mumberlin' word* (arr. Hayes); *Plenty Good Room* (arr. Hayes); *Were You There?* (arr. Hayes); *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* (arr. Hayes). Vanguard 448, \$5.95. Vol. II:

Der Jungling und der Quelle (Schubert); *Sehnsucht* (Beethoven); *Die Liebe hat gelogen* (Schubert); *Der Musensohn* (Schubert); *Absence* (Berlioz); *Le Faune* (Debussy); *Song of Solomon* (Moussourgsky); *Pity a po' boy* (arr. James); *O le' me shine* (arr. Parham); *Too Late* (arr. Hayes); *Ezekiel saw de wheel* (arr. Hayes); *O Mary don't You weep* (arr. Hayes).

Hayes); Good News (arr. Hayes); *Every time I feel the Spirit* (arr. Brown); *Po' Pilgrim* (arr. Hayes); *As One People* (arr. Hayes). Vanguard 449, \$5.95. Roland Hayes (tenor) with Reginald Boardman at the piano. (2 discs come boxed).

▲ROLAND HAYES made his formal débüt in 1919 in Aeolian Hall, New York, with the late Harry T. Burleigh at the piano. Writing in *The New York Times* the next day, Richard Aldrich said: "He is one of those with natural voices, who have not lost in cultivation that rare gift of unctuous humor and pathos of his race . . . The young man's enunciation was remarkable, not least so in the dream from Massenet's *Manon*, which he sang in good French." Roland Hayes' diction always has been exceptional, and his languages have always been good. What an extraordinarily talented artist he has been, and still is! Those of us who regularly attended a Roland Hayes recital know how wonderful each of those all too rare evenings was. He should have made these recorded recitals 20 years ago for, though he has lost none of his artistry, his vocal powers are not quite what they formerly were. The unctuous quality of the voice may be gone, yet he knows how to express the mood of a song, whether *Lieder*, *aria antiche*, French *chansonette*, or the spirituals of his race, in a truly inimitable manner.

Some years back, Hayes made a recital album for Columbia, which deserves to be transferred to LP. I still possess some of the few spiritual discs that he made for Vocalion in the 1920s. But though he gained fame in Europe and always sang to crowded houses in this country, the record companies seemed to ignore his unique place in the music world. How ambitious he still is, undertaking today such a program as this—from Machaut's 13th-century *Lied* to our own generation: each song sung in its own language, even the one by Moussorgsky. Talent, did I say? Yes, but talent spelled with capitals. The closest songs to Hayes' heart are those of his own people, and he sings them with conviction and rare feeling.

His *Were You There?* has always been an experience for its intense pathos, and his *Ezekiel saw de wheel* for its humor. Perhaps he should have re-done some of these songs, for his intonation varies and at least one, Caldara's *Alma del core*, is disturbing in this respect. But when we consider that Hayes is 67 this year, we realize the remarkable ability of the artist. Some have called Hayes "a musician's singer," which remains a true compliment, for Hayes' musicality is inborn and he thinks, breathes and lives the music that he performs—an incontrovertible reason why a Roland Hayes' recital has always been a rare musical experience. Reginald Boardman at the piano is a true co-partner, which is another tribute to Hayes. The recording is realistic and natural—both the singer and his accompanist manifest their presence in the reproduction.

—P.H.R.

OPERA SPOTLIGHT

MENOTTI: *Amelia al Ballo* (opera buffa in one act—complete)—Margherita Carosio (Amelia, soprano), Rolando Panerai (The Husband, baritone), Giacinto Prandelli (The Lover, tenor), Maria Amadini (The Friend, contralto), Enrico Campi (Chief of Police, basso), Silvana Zanolli (First Chambermaid, mezzo), Elena Mazzoni (Second Chambermaid, mezzo), and the orchestra and chorus of La Scala conducted by Nino Sanzogno. Angel LP 35140, boxed, \$5.95.

▲ONE of my oldest shellac singles, retained these many years because it contained the overture to this delicious Menotti work, now can be retired with honor. Angel has given us a superb performance of the entire work—in Italian, unfortunately, but you couldn't very well expect a La Scala cast to sing in English and the composer has seen to it that nothing is lost in the translation. The singing is for the most part first-rate, but no vocal heroics are called for anyway and the main idea is always to keep the show moving, which Maestro

The American Record Guide

Sanzogno certainly does. The plot is flimsy but sufficient to hold up one act: an upper class lady has a lover, which is plot-wise relatively unimportant (except to her husband), and he is supposed to escort her to a ball, which is all-important (to the lady of the title role). Both gentlemen come to grief, which subsequently involves a police chief. Needless to explain, perhaps, he takes her to the ball. All good clean fun, operatically speaking. From any point of view except the super-sonic, this is a peach of a recording, which is to say that while it would hardly stand an Audio Fair audience on its head it provides enough sense of theater for any friendly-disposed listener. Highly recommended. —J.L.

MONTEVERDI: *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorina; Ballo in onore dell' Imperatore Ferdinando III, della Casa d'Austria; Amor che deggio far?*; Claudia Garbi (mezzo soprano), Emma Tegani (soprano), Alfredo Nobile (tenor), Madrigalisti Milanesi, String Orchestra conducted by Renato Fait. Vox PL-8560, \$5.95.

MONTEVERDI: *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*; **ALBINONI:** *Oboe Concerto No. 2 in D minor*; Ribacchi (mezzo soprano), Rapisardi (soprano), Carlin (tenor), Orchestra di Maestri di La Scala conducted by Nino Sanzogno and F. Ranzani (oboe), La Scala String Orchestra conducted by T. Valdinoci. Colosseum 1014, \$5.95.

▲**MONTEVERDI'S Combat of Tancredi and Clorinda** is not an opera but a dramatic cantata in which the principals appear in costumes and mime the action. It was an innovation in its time, but today for all the intrinsic merit of its musical values, the long recitative passages of the Narrator do not sustain immediate interest. Yet, as I said before (see page 94, Dec. 1952 issue), the composer's genius for dramatic expressiveness proves more and more fascinating in subsequent hearings. The earlier Period release had a poor Narrator and an acceptable Tancredi and Clorinda. In Monteverdi's *January, 1955*

day, one gathers that the Narrator was sung by a tenor voice and possibly the part of Tancredi. Of the two performances, the Vox one is the better. Only the talented Luisa Ribacchi, as the Narrator in the Colosseum disc sustains interest with her poignant dramatic style. Soprano Rapisardi and tenor Carlin are not as convincing as Clorinda and Tancredi. Emma Tegani and Alfredo Nobile are vocally better endowed, and Claudia Garbi's beauty of voice is in her favor. The Vox version is attributed to an edition by Virgilio Mortari, who supplies notes on his approach to this music for present-day performance. The other version follows a similar pattern. The splendid recording of the Vox gives it precedence over other issues.

The Vox disc presents two other works of Monteverdi of intrinsic interest, the first a ceremonial ballet in honor of the Emperor Ferdinand III of Austria and the second a charming Canzonetta. The Colosseum disc offers an *Oboe Concerto* by Albinoni, (1671-1750), a gifted and much admired composer of his time. Though well played, it does not compete with the performances of this composer's works performed by the Virtuosi di Roma, now it is as well recorded. —P.H.R.

STRAUSS, Joh.: *Wiener Blut*; Karl Doench (Prime Minister), Nicolai Gedda (Count Zedlau), Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (Countess Zedlau), Erika Koeth (Franzi), Alois Pernerstorfer (Kagler), Erich Kunz (Josef), Emmy Loose (Pepi, his wife), others, the Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus, Otto Ackermann (conductor). Angel set 3518, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲“WHAT is truly Viennese is Viennese charm.” And here, we have it. It looks like Viennese operetta has discovered an unrivaled company in this ensemble, most of whom we met previously in *The Merry Widow* and the *Land of Smiles*. The title *Wiener Blut* (*Vienna Blood*) stems from a Viennese saying—“Does Vienna blood strengthen one's courage?”—is a work assembled in the spring of 1899 from various pieces

of music that Strauss had previously composed. Hence, it will be familiar at almost every turn of a page to those who know their Johann Strauss inside out. Strauss sanctioned this operetta mélange and blessed it on his death bed. And that blessing carried the operetta around the world in triumph. A German performance of this work (*Urania*), issued earlier, retards in interest with this more deftly polished and completely charming presentation, for here is graceful artistry that is eminently Viennese. Not all of the spoken dialogue is included, but few will protest. The story is somewhat involved, but who cares when Johann, Jr.'s music gives it substance. The recording is splendid, and Angel's fine packaging includes a complete libretto. What more could one ask? —P.H.R.

CARL NIELSEN

NIELSEN: *Symphony No. 5, Op. 50; Maskarade—Overture;* Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra, Thomas Jensen (conductor). London LL-1143, \$5.95. *Maskarade—Four Excerpts;* Same orchestra and conductor. London 10" LD-9156, \$2.95.

NIELSEN: *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra; Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra;* Gilbert Jespersen (flute), Ib Erikson (clarinet), same orchestra, Mogens Woeldike (conductor). London LL-1124, \$5.95.

▲NIELSEN'S *Fifth Symphony* (1920) is undoubtedly his greatest, a work that grows on one with repeated hearings. Here, there is a suggestion that he has linked himself with nature, and the struggling with the complexities of life are not as complex. Robert Simpson, in his book on the composer, says that in it he "returns again to the special consideration of humanity: this time, however, he is not confined to the individual, but is concerned with man's great effort to understand and master his environment." The author points out that in the finale where two fugues are used, one fast and one slow, that this is "perhaps the only piece of its kind since the *Grosse Guge* and last

movement of the *Hammerklavier Sonata*." The composer was at the height of his powers when he wrote this work; in his *Sixth Symphony* there is suggestion of his latter illness. While in many ways a complex score, the *Fifth Symphony* grips the imagination with its dramatic puissance and its quiet poetic philosophizing. It is wonderfully performed by Mr. Jensen and the orchestra which is indicative of considerable preparation. The recording is brilliantly realistic in dynamics and clear in detail, reverberantly full which results in some slight but unannoying pre-echo.

The music of *Maskarade*, a comic opera dating from 1906, is gay and brilliant, humorous and melodically delightful. There is more than a suggestion of a modern Danish Mozart in this music. The overture, which is witty and sparkling, is rather misplaced at the end of the symphony, better heard with the two dances and Introduction to Act II on the 10" disc, for proper appreciation and enjoyment.

The *Flute Concerto* (1926) and the *Clarinet Concerto* (1928) are almost worlds apart. The first is joyous and tender in its suggestion of nature. Nielsen said that "the flute cannot belie its true nature. It is at home in Arcadia and prefers pastoral moods." The score, dedicated to Mr. Jespersen, was first played by him in 1926, and it is unlikely that anyone today could play it more sympathetically. Jensen's conducting is equally adept—no mean feat in a difficult score. The *Clarinet Concerto* is more "severely objective," fluctuating in mood, but its seeming conflict has many qualities, among which are wit and sorrowful tenderness, that offset its frequent irascibilities. It, too, is a difficult score, and both the soloist and conductor are to be praised for their splendid musicianship. There is another performance by Louis Cahuzac, John Frandsen and the Copenhagen Royal Opera Orchestra (Columbia 10" ML-2219) in which the soloist is "too aggressively intense," in comparison to Mr. Erikson. Both as a performance and a recording, this new issue is preferable. These concertos are superbly recorded. —P.H.R.

The American Record Guide

RECORD COLLECTORS

will be talking about . . .

. . . **Cetra's** recent announcement, published in the Italian press, regarding its future plans for recorded opera. To date, Cetra has issued 52 operas. Its plans for the future promise 44 more, many of which are unknown to American listeners. It is to be hoped that this enterprising organization, which has honored its countrymen's love of opera, will be more successful than in the past in the selection of its singers. Surrounding one or two leading artists with second-rate ones is not conducive to enjoyment of such promised operas as Meyerbeer's *L'Africana* and *Gli Ugonotti*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Moussorgsky's *Boris Godounov*, Tchaikovsky's *Eugen Onegin*, Zandonai's *Giulett e Romeo*, Verdi's *Il Ballo in Maschera*, *Macbeth*, *Otello* and *I Vespri Siciliani*, Charpentier's *Louise*, Gounod's *Faust*, Wagner's *Il Maestro di Cappella (Die Meistersinger)* and other proposed releases. Moreover, some of these operas are not as successful in Italian as in their native language. However, Italians favor all operas in their own language, and Cetra is after all serving mainly its own countrymen.

The list also includes Puccini's *Edgar* and *Le Villi*, Donizetti's *La Favorita* and *Linda di Chamounix*, Mascagni's *Guglielmo Ratcliff*, *Iris* and *Lodoletta*, Auber's *Fra Diavolo*, Catalani's *Dejanice*, *Loreley* and *La Wally*, Rossini's *Mose*, *La Scala di Seta* and *Signor Bruschino*, Leoncavallo's *Zaza*, Wolf-Ferrari's *Secreto di Susanna*, Boito's *Mefistofele*, Massenet's *Manon*, Saint-Saëns' *Sansone e Dalila*, Bizet's *Carmen* and *I Pescatore di Perle*, Thomas' *Mignon*, Flotow's *Marta*, Bellini's *I Puritani*, Cilea's *L'Arlesiana*, and Delibes' *Lakmé*. An *Orfeo* is also announced, presumably Gluck's, or could it be Monteverdi's? Two earlier operatic works are promised—Galuppi's *Il Filosofo di Campagna* and Pergolesi's *Il Geloso Schernito*. Cetra also includes another performance of Verdi's *Requiem Mass*. All in all, this is quite an ambitious program, which may take a couple of years or more to realize

. . . **pre-recorded tape**, more and more during 1955, for many other companies are entering the field. However, RCA Victor is the only concern that has leading artists worthy of serious consideration at the price that is charged for tape reels. Smaller concerns are featuring mostly second-rate European performances. It is not likely that discriminating listeners will be wooed from LPs too quickly for all the wonderful tonal qualities of the best tape performances, for tape reels are far less easy to handle than discs. Another point is the curious difference in sound from different equipment which several readers have substantiated. Many listeners think the chief asset of tape is for home recording and taking performances from the airways. Others, divided in their allegiance to LP and tape, are frequently disappointed to find that not all tape performances excel over disc ones. And so it goes. Considering the vast riches of LP and the artistic talent involved, it does not look like tape will usurp completely the prestige of the disc. Considering the expense involved, it is more than likely that most listeners will prefer LPs now they have been reduced in price. However, recorded tape is here to stay and record collectors will definitely be discussing it more and more in 1955.

Notes and Reviews

THREE IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

ORCHESTRA

ANTHEIL: *Capital of the World*; **BANFIELD:** *The Combat*; Ballet Theatre Orchestra conducted by Joseph Levine. Capitol LP disc P-8278, \$5.95.

▲IF George Antheil's latest ballet score were more shapely and gave a greater impression of a sense of destination, your reviewer would have no doubt about its finding a way into standard orchestral repertory. As it is, it supports Eugene Doring's choreography based on Hemingway's famous short story splendidly and is one of the most original ballet scores created since the war. It is full of color, dark and bright; and it further reminds one of urban Spanish centers with its feeling of violence and delicate sensuality. This music has a high dissonance content controlled by a calculated emotional center; its orchestration is the work of a master. It is, in short, music well worth your attention. One cannot quite find a similar enthusiasm for Raffaello de Banfield's *The Combat*. Though it sounds well and complements satisfactorily William Dollar's popular but really undistinguished dance composition, it has many trivial and banal sections which fight with others of tender beauty and convincing passion. The latter, however, do make one look forward to forthcoming works from Mr. Banfield. The performances by Joseph Levine and his associates are among the best they have given us. Capitol's recording

is, in a word, superb. All in all, a most interesting issue.

—C.J.L.

ARRIAGA: *Sinfonia a gran orquesta*; *Los Esclavos Felices*—Overture; *Agar* (cantata); Orquesta Nacional de Madrid, Maria Ripolles (soprano in latter), Jesus Arambarri (conductor). Decca DL-9756, \$5.95.

▲ARRIAGA (1806-1826) has been called the Spanish Mozart. Had he lived longer he might have achieved comparable masterpieces, considering the mature qualities of these works written in his eighteenth year. As might be expected from a gifted youth, the influence of Mozart and others are suggested in the symphony, yet the spirit of the music reveals a budding personality that has something to say on his own. All four movements are based on the classical pattern, with outer sections of dramatic intensity, a mood of quiet beauty in the slow movement and a reminder of Spanish dance rhythms in the Minuet. Arriaga wrote his opera, *The Happy Slaves*, at thirteen. Its overture, whether revised later or not, shows a melodic fluency and invention suggesting a man twice that age. The cantata, based on the Biblical theme of Hager and Ismael, belongs to the same period as the symphony and musically is equally a winner. Unfortunately, the Spanish soprano singing has little feeling for its style, which demands a smoother line and less of the operatic spirit she conjures. The in-

The American Record Guide

strumental works are excellently played and well recorded. Those who know the string quartets of Arriaga will find cause to rejoice in these since they reveal an advancement in his artistic status that favorably place him with some of the foremost men of that day. —P.H.R.

BACH, J. S.: *Concertos for Two Claviers, No. 1 in C Minor and No. 2 in C Major*; Vera Appleton and Michael Field (pianos) and the Castle Hill Festival Orchestra conducted by Frank Brief. Period LP SPL-700, \$5.95.

BACH, J. S.: *Concertos for Three Harpsichords, No. 1 in D Minor and No. 2 in C; Concerto for Four Harpsichords in A Minor* (after Vivaldi); Helma Elsner, Rolf Reinhardt, Franz Peter Goebels, Renate Noll and Willy Spilling (harpsichords) and the Pro Musica String Orchestra of Stuttgart conducted by Rolf Reinhardt. Vox LP PL-8670, \$5.95.

▲THE Period coupling is the only one available of these two works in which pianos are used. For many listeners this will not constitute grounds for purchase. I think they sound all wrong, in addition to which Brief's conducting is casual to put the best light on it. For me the only right instrument is the harpsichord; I'll stick with the earlier Haydn Society disc. The *Concerti* for three and four keyboards are handsomely presented in the new Vox recording (the *D Minor Concerto* was omitted from the competitive Haydn Society issue) and the reproductive range is exceptional. —J.L.

BACH: *Violin Concertos in A minor and E major*; Jascha Heifetz (violin) and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Alfred Wallenstein. RCA Victor LP LM-1818, \$5.95.

▲IF you go along with Schweitzer's concept of the emotional Bach, then Heifetz is not for you. On the other hand, he plays the two concertos with more richness of sound, if not exactly warmth, than does any of the competition. And the accompaniments of Wal-

tone-arm teddy was a needle hoodnik



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lenstein are good taste itself. Any quibbling with the artist's technical accomplishment would be rather silly—who else could throw off these pieces with such debonair perfection? Perhaps that is what communicates, instead of Bach. But execution of such *nonpareil* quality is a great deal in itself. The sound fairly shimmers with presence, although it is a trifle unsettling to read on the back cover that the recording was made in a moving picture studio. —J.L.

BARTOK: *Violin Concerto*; Yehudi Menuhin (violin) and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler. RCA Victor LP LHMV-3, \$5.95.

▲NOT yet have we had the recorded performance of this magnificent work. Varga and Fricsay have come as close to the ideal as any collaborators thus far—a bit closer, I think, than the present pair, for all the sumptuousness of the New Orthophonic sound and the audible dedication of the participants. I happen not to like the Menuhin tone of late, which is purely a subjective matter. The super-cautious attention to detail on the part of Furtwängler, however, is another thing altogether. It becomes the slow movement, where Bartók is at his most caressing, but it is out of place elsewhere, where the accompaniment needs to take wing. Let it be understood that this is a tremendously difficult piece to put across, albeit worth every effort, so that even a satisfactory presentation of it, which this is, merits commendation. But so grand a masterpiece deserves truly inspired handling. —J.L.

BARTOK: *Divertimento for String Orchestra* (1939); *Two Portraits*, Op. 5; the RIAS Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ferenc Fricsay. Decca LP DL-9748, \$5.85.

BARTOK: *Deux Images* (for orchestra); *Two Rhapsodies* (for violin and orchestra); Emanuel Vardi (violin) and the New Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Franco Autori and Tibor Serly. Bartók LP BR-307, \$6.45.

▲THE Bartók disc is a re-coupling of two earlier 10-inch issues. Unless I am mistaken the performances also have been re-engineered, because the sound is up to Peter Bartók's highest current standards, which are as high as there are. The Fricsay interpretations are, as you would expect, exciting and persuasive. I was fascinated, though, to note that in the *Divertimento* he adopted a slower tempo than one expected—quite the reverse of his usual procedure. The *Portraits* are available on two different Bartók couplings, one each with the *Dance Suite* and the suite from *Mikrokosmos*. Both are well engineered, but the conductor in either case is Autori, who is no match for Fricsay on executive or interpretative grounds. The Decca sound is full and rich, perhaps a bit too bassy. —J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 6, Op. 68 (Pastoral)*; *Sounds of Nature*; Leopold Stokowski conducting members of the NBC Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LM-1830, \$5.95.

▲RECORDING techniques are always remarkable for balance, clarity and lovely instrumental sound in a Stokowski-directed performance, and this disc is no exception to the rule. Stokowski has ideas, the validity of which some musicians might well question, but his admirers inevitably seem to approve. Here, he adds "sounds of nature" to Beethoven's music, and in justification of these "enhancing" effects explains his premise at the end of the symphony. The performance is a more leisurely one than most conductors give—the second movement, *By the Brook*, being unusually slow. Related to a motion picture, this performance would probably be effective; however, as it is heard from this disc, it is not like the Beethoven most of us were brought up with. —P.H.R.

BIZET: *Carmen—Suite*; **GOUNOD:** *Faust—Ballet Music*; St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Vladimir Golshmann (conductor). Capitol P-8288, \$5.95.

BIZET: *Carmen—Suite*; *L'Arlesienne Suite No. 1*; Vienna State Opera

The American Record Guide

Orchestra, Mario Rossi (conductor). Vanguard 455, \$5.95.

▲BOTH of these discs are recommended, though keen competition exists for either. Recording in both cases is realistic though different in quality. The Capitol has less reverberation, while the Vanguard has considerable even to pre-echoes. Of the two conductors, Rossi in the *Carmen* suite emphasizes the music's vivid coloring and lilt while Golschmann deals in subtleties. If you like the *Faust* music, this is as good a version as any. If you do not have the *L'Arlesienne* music, Rossi plays it persuasively. —J.N.

BRAHMS: *Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 15*; Artur Rubinstein (piano) and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner. RCA Victor LP LM-1831, \$5.95.

▲SOME months ago I wrestled with two of three new versions of this score in a single omnibus review. Foolish consistency being endemic in the reviewing business, I am automatically elected to bring my intensive recent experience to bear on the latest arrival. I was prepared to find in favor of the Serkin performance that came out first in the recent contest. Lo, the inconsistent Rubinstein walks away with all honors, and Reiner makes the Chicago Symphony do things that I never heard out of Severance Hall. The sound is almost up to the standards that were set by Reiner's *Zarathustra* and *Heldenleben*, which are about as hi a fi as I have heard anywhere except for Westminster's deservedly well-touted "laboratory series." Musically, Reiner is much more compatible with Brahms, to my way of thinking, than Szell ever could be. And of course Rubinstein is the king of the thunderers when he is in form. He was not in *Carnaval*, just a short while ago, but he is here. This performance is a miracle of massive virtuosity, with enough semblance of fumbling tenderness to lend precisely the right respite every now and then when the score subsides for a spell. The endless slow movement ripples for January, 1955

ward like the proverbial brook, exquisite in its languorous motion, but never Chopinesque in style for all the soloist's threatening affinity to that attitude. Altogether a fine achievement.

—J.L.

BRAHMS: *Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77*; Johanna Martzy (violin) and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Paul Kletzki. Angel LP 35137, \$5.95.

▲UNTIL now I had not had the pleasure of hearing this amazing young Hungarian artist. This performance is an auspicious introduction to a talent that must be reckoned absolutely first class. There have been a plethora of Brahmses in the past few months, none of them entirely worthy. This one emphatically is. The lady has fire, taste, the grace of a gazelle, the power of a tigress, and the best intonation in the distaff department since Morini. She recalls Morini, in fact, and that is about as nice a compliment as any fiddling miss could ask. Kletzki's ritornel is deferent, but not obsequious, and the sound is excellent. —J.L.

BRITTEN: *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, Op. 10*; **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS:** *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*; Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Angel 35142, \$5.95.

▲BRITTEN'S *Variations*, based on a waltz theme from Bridge's *Idyll No. 2* for string quartet, has been well played by Boyd Neel on a London disc (LL-801) and better recorded. The work is satirical in nature and Neel seems closer to its mood than von Karajan, for all the latter's musicality. The loss of amplitude in crowding this work onto one side of a disc results in dynamics that are far from satisfactory with almost fade-out *pianissimos* and reluctant *fortes*. The Vaughan Williams fares better and von Karajan gives a beautiful performance in which the recording with its true *pianissimos* serves the music to advantage, though at time he is almost too assertive for this contemplatively serene music. Collins (London) and

Boult (Westminster) are closer related to this English music and in some ways better recorded. Admirers of von Karajan will undoubtedly find cause to esteem his musicality in both works, and well they may.

—P.H.R.

BRUCKNER: *Symphony No. 3 in D Minor* ("Wagner Symphony"); the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Hans Knappertsbusch. London LP LL-1044, \$5.95.

▲NOT a perfect performance by the most rigid standards of execution, but what horn section can get through a Bruckner symphony without mishap? Surely this is the best version currently available. The one by Adler, on SPA, is badly recorded by late criteria and spread over three sides in the bargain—which is no bargain at all, of course, unless you happen to feel very strongly about the fragment of the Mahler *Tenth* that is included in the set. (The better part of it is mated with Scherchen's Mahler *Fifth* anyway.) As to the Goehr, Fekete's on Remington being included out on the face of it, I must say that it remains upon comparative re-hearing a very respectable job indeed. But few Concert Hall recordings ever reproduced as impressively as this London one does, and in works that need a big sound, as Bruckner's music does, there can be no argument as to the superiority of *ffrr* techniques. Knappertsbusch knows the score and loves it, obviously, and so does the Vienna Philharmonic. If he could have had the NBC to work with, and if the NBC boys had felt the slightest *rapproche* with Bruckner, which I am sure they did not, the performance might have been smoother. But then, Bruckner in chromium plate would not be Bruckner; better to have his rough edges than a sparkling, superficial run-through of the sort that America's finest orchestras are apt to indulge in when the spirit eludes them, as Bruckner's almost always does.

—J.L.

Contemporary Music for String Orchestra: *Two Pieces* (Copland), *Rounds*

160

(Diamond), *The Hollow Men* for trumpet and strings (Persichetti), *Three American Dances* (Goeb), and *Music for Strings* (Porter); the MGM String Orchestra conducted by Izler Solomon. MGM LP E-3117, \$4.85.

▲HOW many more times will *Rounds* turn up on programs of this kind? It's a perfectly good piece, shades of Janacek's *Sinfonietta* and all, but there are other American works crying out for the attentions of recording companies. The rest of Solomon's list is welcome. Persichetti is glib but frighteningly expert as a rule. Here he is just expert, and even poignant in his limning of the famous Eliot lines; Sidney Baker's solo work is outstanding. Goeb's *Dances* are essays in sophisticated folklorism, neither demanding nor rewarding. The early Copland pieces (1928) I heard for the first time in a live concert last year and liked them; actually they are better known in their alternate form as the *Two Pieces* for String Quartet. Both are superbly wrought miniatures, amazing in their prefiguration of the latter-day style to which the composer has gravitated. The master knew how to say what he wanted even in those Boulanguer years. The longish Porter work is a model of string writing, but absolutely devoid of any emotional communication. Taken altogether, however, a worthwhile disc, admirably performed and adequately recorded.

—J.L.

FRANCK: *Symphonic Variations*; **FAURE:** *Ballade, Op. 19*; **SAINT-SAENS:** *Concerto No. 5 in F, Op. 103*; Jean Doyen (piano) (in Franck and Fauré), Magda Tagliaferro (piano) (in Saint-Saëns), Lamoureux Concerts Orchestra conducted by Jean Fournet. Epic LC-3057, \$5.95.

▲SO SOON after the praiseworthy Cicolini-Cluytens' performance of the Franck (see page 58, October) comes this one, and neck to neck comes the Kathleen Long-Martinon performance of the Fauré. Not so long ago, we had the Jacquinot-Fistoulari performance of the Saint-Saëns. Both the present French pianists are

The American Record Guide

highly competent artists, and Doyen certainly knows how to play the Franck work, but Fournet's orchestral direction is too robust and taut, in my estimation, for the good of this music. Doyen manages to be poetic, but Fournet hardly let him relax even in the gentler lyrical pages. After listening to Miss Long and Mr. Martinon perform Fauré's *Ballade* with sensitivity and exquisite tone, this performance bears no relation to it. The very things that Fauré never intended, display and boldness, make the work sound like something else which may be an art in itself. Saint-Saëns fares better; display was something he strove for, and Fournet's incisiveness is generally to the good. It is a long time since we have heard Miss Tagliaferro, who is a brilliant pianist, but somehow I find Jacquinot equally effective in this concerto though Miss Tagliaferro is the stronger personality. The recording is tense on the high end, sometimes lacking in the middle, and over-resonant at the bottom, and it is realistic to a point of stridency at times. Realism is treated more kindly by Angel in the Franck and by London in the Fauré and even MGM was kinder in the Saint-Saëns.

—P.H.R.

GRIEG: *Peer Gynt Suites, Nos. 1 and 2;*

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Nutcracker Suite;* the Philharmonia Orchestra of Hamburg conducted by Hans-Jürgen Walther. MGM LP E-3139, \$4.85.

▲BARGAIN coupling, this, but not for discerning ears. The performances are workaday, with little show of sensitivity anywhere. The sound is adequate, if not very wide in range.

—J.L.

LE GROUPE DES SIX: *Overture* (Tailleferre), *Prelude, Fugue and Postlude* (Honegger), *Sécheresses* (Poulenc), *Le Printemps au Fond de la Mer* (Durey), *Phédre* (Auric), and *Symphony No. 2* (Milhaud); Denise Duval (soprano, in the Durey), *Chorale Elisabeth Brasseur* (in the Poulenc) and *L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire* conducted by Georges Tzipine, with a spoken introduction by Jean Cocteau.

January, 1955

Angel LP set 3515-B, \$11.90.

▲INGENIOUS programming, completely unhackneyed, and fine performances. The longish speech by Cocteau takes up an awful lot of space and I am not sure it was wise to include it, but it does set the scene superbly well for the concert that ensues (which seems to be a duplication of the anniversary gala given shortly before, presumably right down to Cocteau's prefatory remarks). The little Tailleferre overture (to her opéra-bouffe, *There Was A Little Boat*) is a saucy product of 1935, which was actually long after *Les Six* functioned with any kind of like-mindedness. The Honegger piece, dating from 1931, is a vestige of the spectacular *Amphyon* that was composed in collaboration with Valéry and presented by Ida Rubinstein. Quite a strong work, but not especially distinguished except for its craftsmanship, nor especially French, either. The cantata by Poulenc ("Drought"), is a rather recent product (1937) and manifestly an achievement in the modern polyphonic style, although it does not approach his songs or the piano pieces in elegance and individuality of expression. The latter three works, for my taste, are the most exciting. Louis Durey's "Spring at the Bottom of the Sea" was set down in 1920, the most exciting time for *Les Six* and their finest hour in terms of the group-esthetic that gave them their *raison d'être*. As cantatas go (which is usually nowhere) this work is miles ahead of more recent and much more touted *machines* by Honegger and others, not only in emotional impact but in deliciousness of simplicity and artful good taste. Satie, the idol of *Les Six*, would have been proud of this piece. I think he would have liked Auric's *Phédre*, too. The music seems to date from 1950, but its roots go back three decades, which is not a left-handed compliment but must sound like one. What I mean is that Auric has not departed *Les Six* as thoroughly as have all the others, unless the giddy success of his *Moulin Rouge* music turns him into a French Bernard Herrmann. The Milhaud *Second*, written in 1944 at Mills College, is a sturdy, splendid and altogether characteristic work that

leaves no particular after-effect, if that be not opprobrium—because it is not meant to be. Very good sound throughout.

—J.L.

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HAYDN: *Symphony No. 100 in G, No. 102 in B flat*; London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by George Solti. London LP disc LL-1043, \$5.95.

▲THE COUPLING of two of Haydn's most supreme and endearing symphonies and a recording of clarity and spaciousness go far to make this disc attractive. But it is not quite enough. Solti's work has energy and shows a rare degree of fidelity to the scores, but it has no ease and very little grace. Though the Vienna Symphony Orchestra exhibits a ragged ensemble in comparison with the London Philharmonic, your reviewer would prefer Scherchen's Westminster version of these two works any time for their greater appeal of friendly music making and of just enjoying Haydn. —C.J.L.

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LISZT: *Mephisto Waltz No. 1; Prometheus*; Paris Conservatory Orchestra conducted by Karl Muenchinger. London 10" LP disc LD-9153, \$2.95.

▲FOR those who are interested in natural recordings of foreign orchestral playing, this disc can be called a sleeper. Never have I ever heard the Paris Conservatory sound more like the Paris Conservatory than from this disc. Such transparent sound, even in Liszt! Muenchinger, taking a holiday from the 18th century, manages both these scores very well. There is nothing to suggest the excitement his work generally lacks, but what is there (as usual) is solid and dependable. The preference here regarding the *Mephisto Waltz* is for the piano version. *Prometheus* was composed to open Herder's play in 1850; it is the earliest of the Liszt tone poems and seems faded in sentiment and dated in style. Its empty posturing is of the type that outraged the six and helped galvanize that group into a steely force for more natural self expression. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good. —C.J.L.

162

MOZART: *Concerto in C for Oboe and Orchestra, K.314; J. C. BACH: Andante from Sinfonia Concertante in E flat; J. S. BACH: Arioso from Cantata No. 156; Adagio from Concerto from Violin and Oboe in C minor*. Mitchell Miller (oboe) with Maurice Wilk (violin) and Saidenberg Little Symphony conducted by Daniel Saidenberg. Columbia LP disc ML-4916, \$5.95.

▲REVERBERANT, cavernous sound has virtually obliterated the effect of some choice playing by Mitchel Miller and his associates. So inimical is this huge hall resonance to the intimate style of the music at hand that one cannot concentrate for long even on the playing. The moderately engaging Mozart concerto (we usually think of this work as the *Flute Concerto in D*) seems no worse or better on the oboe. The only other work of unusual interest is the *Violin and Oboe Concerto* whose slow movement (here represented) is a dream of beauty. In spite of the somewhat poor quality of recording, the preferred version of this music is the Tabuteau-Stern-Casals performance also on a Columbia LP.—C.J.L.

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MUSIC OF THE NEAPOLITAN SCHOOL: *Sinfonia No. 5 in D minor; Concerto No. 3 in F* (A. Scarlatti); *Concerto No. 2 for 2 Flutes* (Cimarosa); *La Scuffiara—Overture* (Paisiello); Scarlatti Orchestra conducted by Franco Caracciolo. Angel 35141, \$5.95.

▲THE Scarlatti Orchestra belongs to Naples' famous Conservatory San Pietro a Maiella. The conductor was a graduate of this school. Since 1941, he has headed the Allesandro Scarlatti Association, which was founded in 1918. Scarlatti (1659-1725) was a prolific composer whose career began successfully in his twentieth year at Naples. The prevailing elegance of his style reveals an extreme fertility of mind notable for its consistency of songful melodies. Both of these works are fine examples of the early classical symphonic style and welcome additions to the growing LP list of early Italian works. Cimarosa (1749-1801), best known

The American Record Guide

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for his comic opera *Il Matrimonio segreto*, is revealed as an adept composer in the classical concerto style. His songful treatment of the flutes results in a work which, while more naive than Scarlatti's products, is nonetheless delightful for its freshness and ingratiating charm. Paisiello (1741-1816), a successful opera composer in his day, is represented by a gay overture to a comic opera which serves as a pleasing tail-piece to this concert of 17th-century Italian music. Mr. Carraciolo's performances are deft and generally well detailed, stylistically above reproach though lacking a bit in temperament. The solo flutists are most praiseworthy. The recording, derived from two places, is excellent, realistic in quality without being strident. The orchestra, which may well be made up of students as well as professionals, is a well trained organization, to the credit of the conductor.

—P.H.R.

ROSSINI (rev. Casella); *Sonata for Violins, Violoncello and Contrabass*;

GALUPPI (rev. Mortari); *Concerto No. 2 "A Quattro" in B flat*; **TARTINI** (rev. Ravanello); *Concerto in A, for Violoncello and Strings*; **MARCELLO** (rev. Bonelli); *Introduction, Aria, Presto*. I Musici. Angel 35086, \$5.95.

VIVALDI: *Concerto in D minor for Strings and Cembalo* (Mardigalesco); *Concerto in D minor for Viola d'amore, Strings and Cembalo* (rev. Guiranna); *Concerto in D for Violin and Strings*;

Concerto in A for Strings and Cembalo (rev. Guiranna); I Musici. Angel 35087, \$5.95.

VIVALDI: *Concerto in D minor for Viola d'amore, Strings and Cembalo*; *Concerto in B flat for Strings and Harpsichord*; *Concerto in C for Violin, 2 Cellos, Strings and Harpsichord*; *Concerto in D minor for Oboe and Strings*;

Virtuosi di Roma, Renato Fasano, director. Decca DL-9697, \$5.95. **CORRELLI**: *Concerto Grosso in D, Op. 6, No. 4*;

VIVALDI: *Concerto in F for Oboe and Strings*; **CLEMENTI**: *Symphony in D, Op. 18, No. 2*; *Virtuosi di Roma*. RCA Victor LHMV-2, \$5.95.

▲IT IS a cause for rejoicing that we are getting more of the Italian chamber orchestral works in performance by highly capable Italian musicians. The Italians have a way with this music; they are, one might say, *molto simpatica* to it, and they play it from the heart with vibrant string tone which is quite the opposite of what the German musicians do. The latter are dry in tone and far less winning. The I Musici are a relatively new group of 12 young musicians who play without a conductor. While a highly competent group, they do not yet have the unanimity, the polish or the tonal coloration of the Virtuosi di Roma, directed by Renato Fasano, but one welcomes them for their earnest musicianship and for the unusual material they play. In their first disc one wonders about the work of the arrangers which, in the rustic piece of Rossini and the Marcello, seems rather "unduly" revised, especially in the latter, where the scoring is coarse and harsh. Toscanini played the Rossini *Sonata* last year in a better arrangement. But it's good to have this work recorded. Rossini suggested it was a youthful indiscretion on his part, but it is nonetheless a delightful piece, quite virtuosic in the fast movements. Both the Galuppi and the Tartini are worthy of their illustrious authorships, and both are splendidly played. The Vivaldi disc of I Musici is played with fine style but not with the sentient warmth of the Virtuosi di Roma. Anyone who buys the latter will definitely want the former, however, for the two programs present some of Vivaldi's most inspired concertos, though in the one duplication—the *Viola d'amore Concerto*—the beauty and refinement of the soloist's performance in the Virtuosi disc is the more memorable. These Vivaldi concertos have some beautiful slow movements, heartfelt as in the *Larghetto* of the *Violin Concerto in D* and the *Largo* of the *Oboe Concerto in D minor*—the latter a *Siciliana* such as Bach might have written. The *Concerto in C for Violin and 2 Cellos* has a nobility that impresses, and the *String Concerto in A* is delightful with its lovely *Andante molto*. The genius of Vivaldi at his

best never ceases to astound, especially when performers have fine musicianship and tonal beauty.

The last disc presents the Virtuosi di Roma under a new banner, for HMV recently took this ensemble over from Deutsche Grammophon. No group does better justice to the music of Corelli and Vivaldi than do these players. Their playing, unlike the Società Corelli, is in the true classical tradition, always alert and properly varied without the suggestion of romanticism of the latter group. The feature of this disc is a symphony by Muzio Clementi, who has been called the Italian Mozart, which has real musical interest. It is generally conceded that Clementi's symphonies, which the late Alfredo Casella restored from old manuscripts, "bridge an important symphonic transition between the 18th and 19th centuries." There is much of the efficiency and alertness of Haydn in this music. It eschews sentiment, even in its *Andante* section, and its Minuet is a departure from its true 18th-century counterparts. It is the work of a man of considerable musical intellect that says succinctly what he has to say. Fasano and his group perform it with appropriate vivacity and verve.

The reproduction in these records is excellent, though varied in some ways. The more mellow sound of the Virtuosi di Roma in the Decca disc serves the music performed very well, yet the brighter quality and greater tenseness in the Victor-HMV disc has its attributes especially in the Clementi. The recordings of I Musici are realistic in tonal quality and generally rich in sound.

—P.H.R.

SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 1 in D; Symphony No. 2 in B Flat;* the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia LP ML-4903, \$5.95.

▲PERFECTLY lovely, every minute of this disc. The Schubert *First* has been around for some time in a serviceable Oceanic version, and several conductors have whipped the *Second* into a thing of epic proportions. Beecham straightens

the matter out completely. His *First* and *Second* both are Schubertian to the nth degree, never too suave and never pretentious, just singing and sweet and with all of their seams showing. The sound is excellent.

—J.L.

Showpieces for Orchestra: *1812 Overture* (choral arrangement) (Tchaikovsky), *Raetzyk March* (Johann Strauss I), *Overture to La Forza del Destino* and *Preludes to Acts I and III of La Traviata* (Verdi), and *From Bohemia's Woods and Fields* (Smetana); the RIAS Symphony Orchestra of Berlin conducted by Ferenc Fricsay. Decca LP DL-9738, \$5.85.

▲FRICSAY is an exceptionally able conductor, and he somehow manages to infuse new life into these thrice-familiar repertory items. The "choral arrangement" of the *1812* was new to these ears; very little of it is choral, as it turns out. Fricsay never lets it sag, as Russian choral works are apt to. His inclination to brisk tempi wherever possible is, in fact, the most saving grâce of this collection. Everything zings right along, and there is no loss of the inherent curves, either. Fine reproduction. Surfaces a bit noisy.

—J.L.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Nutcracker Ballet, Op. 71* (Complete); Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Otto Dobrindt. Urania set 237, 2 discs, \$11.90.

▲THIS performance is a bit on the heavy side compared to the Dorati-Minneapolis Symphony one (see page 328, June, 1954). Dobrindt is a competent musician, remembered for some excellent operatic work in connection with leading German singers, but here he evokes less of the inherently balletic quality that Dorati was able to elicit, which might well be a matter of sufficient rehearsals. This set is priced at the going rate, while the Mercury release is higher since one is charged extra for its fancy packaging. But even at that this one is not really worth the price by comparison. In a day when music is not everything, the gunshot business on side

The American Record Guide

two lacks essential realism. It sounds far less authentic than Mercury's and more like an errant bottle cork than true shooting.

—J.N.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Sleeping Beauty*, Op. 66; Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin conducted by Adolf Fritz Guhl. Urania LP disc URLP-7127, \$5.95.

▲THIS is a handsome, solid recording of yet another spate of excerpts from the great complete score of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*. With few exceptions, the excerpts are in order; a feature is the first recording I remember of the *Pas Berrichon*. It should be called to your attention that the *Bluebird Pas de Deux* is not on the first side as labeled, but rather on the second. Guhl has a good grasp of the score and is obviously interested in making music, not effects, with the score. Tempi are well chosen, except in the case of the *Panorama* and the *Vision Scene* when they are too slow. The ensemble is uneven in the extreme, and the cello solo in the *Vision Scene* is very bad indeed. For the numbers that this disc includes, its chief competition is the Stokowski version on Victor LP LM-1010. The Stokowski performance is superior on most counts, but the recording (a landmark in the early days of LP) is no longer a match for the gleam and detail of Urania's. —C.J.L.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 6 in B Minor*, Op. 74 (*Pathétique*); the Stadium Concerts Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Bernstein. Deca LP DL-9718, \$5.85.

▲HERE is one *Pathétique* with which I think I can live. Bernstein's temperament is just right for it, even if his tempi might not be. The orchestra (which is of course the New York Philharmonic) plays somewhat less than resplendently, and the music in fact demands more than these fellows deliver, but Bernstein whips them into an emotionalism that is not their usual wont, and that makes all the difference with this music. I am curious as to whether or not Furtwängler got around to the score on LP (others may be satisfied with

January, 1955

Toscanini, Ormandy and Steinberg, all of whom got favorable reviews) because Furtwängler's shellac performance of old was a wonder that I hope he duplicated on microgroove. The sound here is good, although my surfaces are noisy. —J.L.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Fantasia on the "Old 104th" Psalm Tune; Three Sea Chantys*; **PALMER:** *Chamber Concerto; Slow, Slow, Fresh Fount*; the Cornell A Cappella Chorus; Millard Taylor (violin); John Hunt (piano); Robert Sprenkle (oboe) and the Rochester Chamber Orchestra conducted by Robert Hull. Concert Hall Society LP CHS-1190, \$5.95.

▲THE piano is not ordinarily associated with Vaughan Williams. In the *Fantasia* of 1950 it dominates, lending to the whole a character that one cannot find anywhere else in this composer's catalogue. I played the recording for a couple of friends—both Vaughan Williams fans from way back—and neither of them would believe that the music was his! The explanation is, of course, the man's controlling practicality. Provincial choruses often are not very virtuosic; why not let them off easily, therefore, and depend on the far more likely prospect of a competent pianist's being available? The soloist here, John Hunt, is splendidly competent. So, indeed, is the chorus. Altogether the performance probably is better than Vaughan Williams expected to get on the average. Robert Palmer is a fortyish Eastman alumnus who tends to severity à la Roy Harris, self-consciously eschewing any admission of European influence. He writes good, honest music, free of cheap tricks and sometimes, but infrequently, high in expressive content. The *Chamber Concerto* of 1949 is the first of a projected series that will evoke the spirit if not the substance of Baroque form. Not very endearing pages, perhaps a bit more austere conceived than any prototype he had in mind. But sobriety seems to be the essence of the new American school, for better or for worse, and in context Palmer is

one of the more promising fellows. In *Slow, Slow, Fresh Fount*, (1953) he inclines to somewhat warmer, richer sounds. But for this we may have Ben Jonson to thank.

—J.L.

WAGNER: *Overtures to Die Meistersinger, Rienzi, Tannhaeuser, Flying Dutchman*; New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by George Szell. Columbia LP disc ML-4918, \$5.95.

▲HERE the style is absolutely perfect, the sound (except for a certain lack of body in the string tone) likewise. If it were not for a few debatable retardations and accelerations of pace which halt the momentum of at least three of the overtures, the performances could set standards of excellence. Even so, they are capable of giving a good deal more pleasure than Ormandy's Wagner release which was lacking in similar interpretative insight. Though it is a bit unpopular these days to say so: the music still packs a wallop.

—C.J.L.

KEYBOARD

BLOCH: *Violin Sonata*; **HANDEL:** *Violin Sonata No. 6 in E*; **SCHUBERT:** *Sonatina in G Minor, Op. 137, No. 3*; Jascha Heifetz (violin) and Emanuel Bay (piano). RCA Victor LP LM-1861, \$5.95.

▲TWO or three years ago I heard Heifetz play the Bloch in Carnegie Hall and let me tell you it was a musical feast. Now he has committed his interpretation to microgroove, and I am a little saddened to report that some of the burning intensity that I remember got lost along the way. This is rather an intellectual performance, very busy with detail and not lacking in the requisite sweep, either, but somehow denuded of the highly personal essence that came across the parquet of Carnegie Hall. Let us not look gift horses too closely in the face, however. This work has gone unrecorded for too long as it was. That it had to wait these many years for LP representa-

tion is something of a disgrace that must be shared by the very few violinists who were capable of meeting the challenge of the music. The estimable editor of this journal was responsible for its honored place in the shellac catalogues of tender memory, and I suspect that he will join me in gratitude to Heifetz for having taken obvious pains to do the score justice. Hear this moving masterpiece by all means; and forget that under musically ideal circumstances it can pull you apart with its pathos and power of utterance. Then maybe it will, anyway. The strange bedfellows of the coupling are attired in the usual satin and silk of the Heifetz treatment. Bay plays magnificently in the Bloch, adequately elsewhere. The sound is brilliantly but still rather studioishly New Orthophonic.

—J.L.

HINDEMITH: *String Trio No. 1, Op. 34; String Trio No. 2*; Jean Pouget (Violin), Frederick Riddle (Viola), Anthony Pini (Cello). Westminster LP WL 5299, \$5.95.

▲GREAT music is supposed to conjure up images, sometimes beautiful, sometimes ugly, but always on a lofty plane surrounded by some sort of clouds, usually cumulus or strato-cumulus depending upon the mood. In this case I can only conjure up the image of three determined string players covered with perspiration forging ahead, determined to reach the end no matter what. Energy, vitality, perseverance, perhaps even egotism, are qualities I find here. Somehow it doesn't seem to be enough. The *Trio No. 1* is a work of Hindemith's te-dum te-dum period. The main section of the first movement sounds like a bit of Holst's St. Paul's Suite churned up into a frantic exercise. It dates from 1924. *Number Two* saw the light of day in 1933, when the humanizing influences of passing time had had considerable opportunity to undermine the inflexible determination of the composer to alienate as many listeners as possible. Seriously, though, fellows, this is not a bad piece as string trios go; it must be fun to play. The performers are top men in their field.

The American Record Guide

They have done a wonderful job with this music, which is by no means easy. Recording is good as to balance and clarity.

—A.W.P.

POULENC: *Sextet for Piano and Winds*;

FRANCAIX: *Quintet for Winds*; Wind Quintet of the Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion française and Jean Francaix (piano). Angel 35133, \$5.95.

▲THE Poulenc work was issued in July, played by the Fine Arts Wind Players and Leona Lurie, coupled with a more imposing mate—Hindemith's *Kleine Kammermusik*, Op. 24, No. 2. The Poulenc is regarded as "one of his better instrumental effects," but to some its eclecticism becomes rather tiresome. The jacket notes go so far as to relate this music to the glories of Rameau and Couperin. The prospective customer would be seriously misled if he were to expect anything more than the barest similarity in points of view. Actually the listener is propelled through Stravinsky cadences, quotations from Mozart, piano passages that recall the song accompaniments of Reynaldo Hahn, and so on. Both Poulenc and Francaix are prodigiously facile composers but their eclecticism has the character of diverse undigested stylistic elements. Francaix has a sureness of hand in instrumental writing that is matched by few living composers, but his quintet is a virtuosic work that seems much ado about nothing. The record is worth buying, however, because of the marvelous performances it presents. These wind players demonstrate every virtue of the French school—clarity of tone production (never a fat sound, very little vibrato), and absolutely accuracy of intonation and attack (they play not only together, but exactly together). The performers meet all requirements of the scores with spirit, sensitivity and mechanical perfection, and the result is a feast for fanciers of woodwind instruments. Francaix is a most accomplished pianist. Except for a slight overemphasis of highs at the expense of the middle, the reproduction is praiseworthy.

—Russell Smith

PROKOFIEV: *Sonata No. 2 in D Minor*, Op. 14; **GLAZUNOV:** *Sonata in E Minor*, Op. 75; **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Nocturne, Capriccioso* and *Scherzo Humoristique*, Op. 19; Emil Gilels (piano). Concert Hall Society LP CHS-1311, \$5.95.

▲ONLY medium good sound, but the Prokofiev, at least, is well worth your attention. I had not realized how much he was influenced by Satie; this relatively early work bristles with temperamental affinity to the great Frenchman for all its unmistakable stylistic personality. It is a shame that Prokofiev's piano sonatas are not better known. Gilels turns out this one in handsome fashion. Likewise the Tchaikovsky trifles, which are notable specifically because the series provided Stravinsky with the thematic basis of his *Baiser de la fée*. The overlong Glazunov I could have done without, but it is at least an eminently pianistic bore. —J.L.

SCHUBERT: *String Quartet No. 14 in D Minor ("Tod un das Maedchen")*; the Vienna Philharmonic Quartet. Telefunken LP LGU-66016, \$5.95.

▲FOR the sound of their Stradivari the Budapesters take all honors, with the Konzerthaus ensemble an alternate choice for glowing reproductive excellence. The present performance is stodgy, rather too sluggish to be dramatic, and a little harsh in tonal quality. —J.L.

WOLPE: *Sonata for Violin and Piano*; *Passacaglia for Piano*; *Quartet for trumpet, tenor saxophone, piano and percussion*; Frances Magness (violin), David Tudor (piano), and ensemble (Robert Nagel, trumpet; Al Cohn, tenor saxophone; Jack Maxin, piano; and Al Howard, percussion) conducted by Samuel Baron. Esoteric LP ES-530, \$5.95.

▲**BERLINER** to the core that he is, even after 20 years of exile, Stepan Wolpe has not chosen to eschew the whilom esthetics of atonalism for any more palatable idiom. Unfortunately he has not chosen, either, to compose as much

jazz as he used to do for a living before 1933. So that the granitic aspects of his art have become, over the years, more and more so, to the extent that he writes now with a kind of surcharged intellectualism. It impels even when it does not communicate, to be sure; Aaron Copland has observed that "his music is strikingly original...some pounding natural force brings it forth and gives it reality." The fact is that the "pounding natural force" is more often than not less natural than naturalistic—meaning, if I may split a hair, that Central European subversion of life to art from which derived an entire generation of neurotic philosopher-artists. Anyway, to get on with it, Wolpe is a composer of considerable power, although one should utterly ignore the silly program notes that disfigure this welcome and quite representative recording. The *Passacaglia*, written in what was then Palestine in the '30s, is an insistently succinct work built on all of the intervals in progression. The very impressive but hardly felicitous *Sonata*, and the bitter-sweet *Quartet*, with its satiric overtones of popular style, are recent products but one doesn't know how recent. The annotations are so cluttered with testimonial excesses that there is no room to discuss the music. Esoteric has provided superb sound, as usual, for this enterprising and exciting disc. —J.L.

BACH: *Italian Concerto; Aria Variata in the Italian Manner; Overture in the French Manner*; Eva Wollmann (piano) Westminster WL-5298, \$5.95.

▲Competent performances by the Viennese pianist Eva Wollman, but not nearly so good as those by Rosalyn Tureck on Allegro, even though better recorded. —E.B.

BARTOK: *For Children, Nos. 1-40; Sonatina (1915)*; Geza Anda (piano). Angel LP disc ANG.35126, \$5.95 or \$4.95.

▲THIS disc will surely be remembered when time comes to make a list of the best 1955 piano recordings. Geza Anda makes a striking impression with the brittle, folksy *Sonatina*, but more important he has given us a view of these lovely and touching pieces for young fingers—for children—that for one listener is absolutely complete. He throws light into corners one did not know existed; he uses an art which conceals art in making the music seem absolutely spontaneous; he is, in short, a dream pianist for Bartók. Now, how about Anda's recording the *Sonata*, as well as the other 45 children's pieces? —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas, Op. 2, Nos. 1 in F minor and 2 in A*; Friedrich Gulda (piano). London LP disc LL-996, \$5.95.

▲GULDA has given us quite a few memorable performances of Beethoven piano sonatas, but these latest do not tarry on that high level. Insufficient care for dynamic contrasts and an overall concept of miniaturization debilitate the life and energy in both these works. Try Backhaus' or Schnabel's recording of the *A major* and see what I mean. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in C minor, Op. 13 (Pathétique); Sonata in C sharp minor, Op. 27, No. 2 (Moonlight); Sonata in F minor, Op. 57 (Appassionata)*; Paul Badura-Skoda (piano). Westminster WL-5184, \$5.95.

▲THESE sonatas are played in good taste by the youthful Badura-Skoda. In the *C minor* only in the opening does he lack the depth of utterance that supplied its subtitle. Most pianists elicit more dramatic impact in the opening movement of the *F minor*, but Badura-Skoda is wise in conjuring the emotion in spirit rather than in force. Indeed, his performance recalls that of his famous teacher, Edwin Fischer, whose playing of this work on old 78s was so greatly admired by many musicians. Technically, Badura-Skoda is well equipped, and his clean passage work reveals sensitivity. For control and restraint, he need hardly

bow to anyone in his performance of the opening movement of the *C sharp minor*. (The notes on this set, attributed to another writer, actually are by your reporter.)

—P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonatas No. 21 in C, Op. 53; No. 15 in D, Op. 28; No. 25 in G, Op. 79; No. 26 in E flat, Op. 81a.* Vox LP disc PL8650, \$5.95. **LISZT:** *Sonata in B minor; Dante Sonata; Etude No. 7 "Eroica"; Etude de Concert No. 2 "La Leggerezza"; Concert Etude No. 2 "Gnomenreigen."* Vox LP disc PL8800, \$5.95. Orazio Frugoni (piano).

▲AFTER Frugoni's satisfying recording of the *Pathétique*, *Moonlight*, and *Apasionata* sonatas, one looked forward to his efforts with the four Beethoven sonatas listed above. Each performance lets one down. Brilliant finger work, speed, drive; and not a moment of comfortable repose, of grace, of manly sweetness. All a great disappointment.

The same ingredients are present on the Liszt disc, and they make some points. The *Dante Sonata* is, of course, deadly, and nothing can save it from the ravages of boredom. And Frugoni plays poorly *La Leggerezza*. But the *Sonata in B minor* has a bright gleam and a thrusting energy that makes it the best recorded version of the work, aside from Farnadi's and Barere's. The *Gnomenreigen* is also effective under Frugoni's strong hands, as is the *Eroica Etude*, here receiving probably its first recorded performance. The recordings are dry, clean, and bracing.

—C.J.L.

FRANCK: *Three Chorals; Piece Heroique;* Feike Asma (organ). Epic LP disc LC-3051, \$5.95.

▲THERE can be little doubt that Epic has produced a faithful recording of the performances Feike Asma produced in the Old Church in Amsterdam, but that will not be enough for anyone other than hi-fi enthusiasts. For the reverberation of the church is aggressive and obscured a good bit of detail. Moreover, Asma's rhythm is too slack to keep

January, 1955

from emphasizing the ruminative characteristics of these otherwise touching works. The version by Robert Noehren of this music is still the one to acquire.

—C.J.L.

Encores in a Quiet Mood: *Nocturno* (Respighi), *The White Peacock* (Griffes), *Pavane* (Ravel), *Idylle* (Chabrier), *Evening in the Country* (Bartók), *Pastourelle* (Poulenc), *Cordoba* (Albéniz), *The Maiden and the Nightingale* (Granados), and *Gymnopédie No. 3* (Satie); Menahem Pressler (piano). MGM LP E-3129, \$4.85.

▲EVIDENCE accumulates that Pressler is right at home in every department of the piano literature. These are exquisite performances, and very well recorded, too, although MGM has not yet eliminated its surface swish.

—J.L.

MOZART: *The Complete Works for Piano Solo*; Walter Gieseking. Angel DeLuxe Limited Edition, 11 discs, \$75.00.

▲1956 is the tercentenary year of Mozart's birth and this, the largest LP volume brought out to date, is dedicated to that occasion. It is a moot question whether any pianist can play all the works of a given composer and successfully enter into the spirit of each and every one. Certainly, Schnabel did not do this in his complete performances of the Beethoven sonatas. Gieseking, who has delicacy of tone and elegance of style, seems to have hit the jackpot in his performances of Debussy's piano music. There is a freshness to his playing, often an exquisite subtlety and a sense of unpremeditated artistry that more often than not is missing in his performances of Mozart's music. While the pianist's tone here is always ingratiating, he conveys little personal feeling for the music in the present projection. His finger work is neat and tidy at all times, his pedalling far too spare for true dynamic distinction. To sum up briefly, Gieseking is more successful in the slighter works, some of which—let it be said—might be enjoyable to while away the time at the keyboard but not of suffi-

cient consequence to hold a listener's undivided attentions from a recording, no matter the artistic stature of the player. In the larger works—the ones in which Mozart was deeply inspired to drama and its implying tension—Giesecking does not rise to the occasion, there is no longer the force and confidence that he brought to his earlier recordings—made before the war under far less favorable conditions for Columbia—the *C minor*, K. 457 and the *B flat*, K. 570, Sonatas. The question arises who could do better these days? Well, that question may be answered before the tercentenary takes place. In the meantime, Giesecking has little real competition except for Lipatti in the *A minor Sonata*, K. 310 and the several sonatas played by Lili Kraus who, for all her frequent vagaries of style, brings freshness and spontaneity to her performances. Angel's packaging of this set is beautiful to look at—a thing of pride for a library shelf—and the program notes are excellent. The recording is realistically a delight to the ear.

—P.H.R.

SAINT-SAENS: *Carnival of the Animals* (original chamber version); **DEBUSSY:** *Petite Suite* (original version); **RAVEL:** *Ma Mère l'Oye* (original version); Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson (duo-pianos) with a chamber ensemble conducted by Izler Solomon. MGM LP E-3114, \$4.85.

▲NOT very close-up sound, but exceedingly good program-building and touching, tender performances. The *Carnival* is notable for the very musical approach of the soloists in a day when the score is regarded as a sort of playing for virtuosos. I am not sure that either the Debussy or the Ravel is maximally effective in its original keyboard setting, but I daresay they would wear well. The soloists are *en rapport* all the way, if just a trifle steely in their collective tone.

—J.L.

SCHUMANN: *Carnaval*; **FRANCK:** *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue*; Artur Rubinstein (piano). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1822, \$5.95. **SCHUMANN:**

Carnaval, Etudes Symphoniques; Alfred Cortot (piano). HMV LP disc ALP-1142, \$7.30.

▲STATUS QUO is still the word, *Carnaval* and *Symphonic Etudes*-wise. Cortot, in spite of some delectable phrasing here and there, is simply too far over the hill to manage the challenging technical problems posed by this music. Much of his work is, indeed, so slovenly that one wonders why the disc was ever released. It provides an unkind memory of a formerly grand artist.

One would have expected Rubinstein, still in possession of most of his former matchless technical skill, to have given us the *Carnaval*. He has on a number of occasions in the concert hall rewarded his listeners with penetrating insight into this magical score. It was not to be; for in his recorded performance, Rubinstein has been so fussy over every little detail that he has drained all the spontaneity from his work. And a *Carnaval* without spontaneity is, of course, a very cheerless spectacle. Rubinstein is in much better form on the overside—the best Franck *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* we have yet had on LP. It is my suspicion that this performance is going to be hard to surpass.

A word about the recordings. The HMV is mellow, full of bass, a bit obscure on some details, generally pleasant, but without the real feel of presence. The Victor is "New Orthophonic," but all the same a little shallow and hard of sound (especially in the *Carnaval*). Detail is wonderfully distinct, however; microphones are close (maybe a little too close). I mentioned *status quo* at the start; that is to say Giesecking gives the best modern version of *Carnaval* in my estimation (but don't pass up the old Rachmaninoff, either). And Geza Anda or Yves Nat provide the versions of the *Symphonic Etudes* that I prefer.

—C.J.L.

SPANISH KEYBOARD MUSIC OF the 18th Century: *Diferencias sobre el Canto del Cabellero* (De Cabezon), *Sonata in F* (Casanovas), *Sonata in D* (Mateo Albeniz), *Aria in D Minor*

The American Record Guide

(Anglés), *Sonata in F Minor* (Gallés), *Sonata in A* (Freinet), *Sonata in F* (Rodríguez), and *Sonatas in D, G Minor, D Minor* and (two of these) *F Sharp Minor* (Soler). José Falgarona (piano). Vox LP PL-8340, \$5.95.

▲SLIGHTLY too dry piano tone; otherwise lovely performances. No great music here, of course, but few dull moments, either, at least on short acquaintance. If you like Domenico Scarlatti, you will like all of these pieces because each of them owes a debt to his style, excepting possibly Anglés and Casanovas, who leaned a bit toward Christian Bach and Haydn, respectively. Excellent sound.

—J.L.

VOICE

ARIAS SUNG AND ACTED: *Scarpia Duet* from *Tosca*, *Ah! Fors' e lui* and *Sempre libera* from *La Traviata*, *Tacea la notte placida* from *Il Trovatore*, *Madamina, Il catalogo* from *Don Giovanni* and *Sono andati?* from *La Bohème*; respectively Maria Caniglia, Armando Borgioli and Nino Mazzotti (acted by Joan Fontaine, Leif Erickson and Karl Weber), Licia Albanese (acted by Geraldine Brooks), Zinka Milanov (acted by Judith Anderson), Ezio Pinza (acted by Dennis King), and Licia Albanese and Giuseppe di Stefano (acted by Geraldine Brooks and John Barrymore, Jr.) RCA Victor LP LM-1864, \$5.95.

▲APPARENTLY the first of these "Arias Sung and Acted" went over with the public, because it is not like Victor to send good money after bad. Myself, I do not understand why anyone except perhaps an elementary voice student could give a nod to it, or to this sequel. Some of the singing is superb, some of it not so good, most of it previously available. Of the dramatics I cannot reasonably speak, my line being something else. Granted that someone who wants to know more about an opera will get a better idea of any given scene by hearing it in the hands of English-speaking actors and actresses, why not just invest the same time in reading the libretto? —J.L.

January, 1955

BARAB: *A Child's Garden of Verses* Russell Oberlin (counter-tenor) and an ensemble conducted by the composer. Esoteric LP ESJ-5, \$4.00.

▲AT first I thought this disc should be consigned to a round-up of "kidiscs," as *Variety* describes recordings designed for listening by children. I couldn't have been more wrong. Youngsters should like it a lot, I hasten to add, but as music it is tailored for the most sophisticated audience. Seymour Barab is a young cellist. At least, that is how he makes his living. On the evidence he ought to find a way to make his career in composition, because this is one of the most utterly charming song cycles I have ever heard. It should be mentioned, too, that it is unique in that it was commissioned by a record company—let us hope that Esoteric's altruistic gesture will be an augury for the future. The style is neo-Satie, in effect, which is to say that the emphasis is on simulating the atmosphere of the text with the simplest possible means. Barab conquers the technical problems handily, amusingly, and convincingly, so that the near-nonsense rhymes seem even more evocative than they really are. I might mention, for what it is worth, that the composer Henry Cowell, who had once set the twenty-four poems himself, heard Barab's work one night at my home and went wildly enthusiastic. I already had. To be realistic, of course, we must assume that much of the credit belongs to Oberlin, for whose singular voice the work was designed. His extraordinary perfection of top tones is a phenomenon in itself, as anyone knows who has run across his solos in the many early music recordings for which he has been enlisted. —J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op. 98; **SCHUBERT:** *Heine songs (Schwanengesang, Nos. 8 to 13)*; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone) and Gerald Moore (piano). His Master's Voice ALP 1066, \$6.95.

▲THIS may look like a "second review": actually it is not altogether the same as

Victor's LHMV 1046. As a matter of fact, it offers less for your money. Instead of eight Schubert songs and two Schumann, we have here only five Schubert, but these are not all duplications. Losing *Staendchen*, *Erlkoenig*, *Nacht und Traeume* and *Du bist die Ruh'*, we acquire *Ihr Bild* and *Die Stadt*, along with *Das Fischermaedchen*, *Am Meer* and *Der Doppelgaenger*. Fischer-Dieskau being the kind of artist he is, there is not one song that will not be missed, no matter which edition of *An die ferne Geliebte* we choose. What really matters is that the quality of sound is better on this imported disc. Our English friends, always more interested in quality than in quantity, do not believe in crowding a record side. One inclines to agree with them if the richer and more natural tone of this recording is a result. —P.L.M.

BERGERETTES: *Non, je n'irai plus au bois; Bergère légère; L'amour s'en-vole; Lisette; Maman, dites-moi; Juenes filles; Menuet d'Exaudet; Chantons les armours de Jean; Non, je ne crois pas; Je connais un berger discret;* Lily Pons (soprano) with Columbia Chamber Orchestra, directed by Hershey Kay. Columbia AL 53, ten-inch, \$2.85.

▲STRANGE that the *Bergerettes*, those charming staples of the vocal studio, have been so long in coming as a recorded program! Now that they are here, their venerable collector and arranger, J. B. Weckerlin, has been forgotten (though his harmonizations have not) in the credit given to orchestrator Hershey Kay, who has expanded the little pastorals to perhaps bigger than life-size. Miss Pons in her best days would have been a logical choice to sing these songs, but now she produces the veriest thread of tone, lacking both steadiness and any sense of climax. —P.L.M.

DVORAK: *Biblical Songs, Op. 99; Gypsy Songs, Op. 55; Love Songs, Op. 83* (sung in German); Hildegard Roessel-Majdan (contralto) with Frank Holletschek at the piano. Westminster WL-5324, \$5.95.

▲DVORAK'S *Biblical* and *Gypsy Songs* have long enjoyed popularity. His *Love Songs*, revised in 1882 from *Lieder* he wrote in 1865 for the girl he was to marry, are less well known and truth to tell, except for three of the eight—the first, fifth and last, are not among his best vocal works. The verses are weak and sentimental, and despite his melodic fertility and ardor Dvorak gave only "external life to the colorless texts." There are those who probably claim rightfully that the *Biblical* and *Gypsy Songs* should be sung in the original Czech since other languages—particularly German and English—alter vowel values to the disturbance of musical phrases. Be that as it may, they have long been favored in German on the continent and elsewhere, and it is unlikely that anyone but a scholar will note these facts. Dvorak, who was a composer of instinct and intuition rather than one of intellectual powers, in his songs composed only to words that awakened his emotions. In regard to his *Biblical Songs*, we are told, his faith was "simple, humble, and comforting," and this is confirmed in his settings of Psalm verses, which vary in quality. Roessel-Majdan is a gifted musician and her artistry is always appreciable, though her tendency to allow some of her tones to become throaty detracts momentarily from her overall artistry. She is more effective than Anny Felbermeyer, who lacked tonal depth, in the *Gypsy Songs*, and her singing of the *Biblical Songs* has more feeling and dignity than a competitive version. In the *Love Songs*, she has the field to herself, and proves a persuasive exponent of these neglected *Lieder*. The recording is very lifelike—gratifying in its balance between voice and piano. Mr. Holletschek, while a competent accompanist, is somewhat lacking in temperament. —P.H.R.

HAYDN: *The Man in the Moon* (sung in German); Soloists and Orchestra of Munich Chamber Opera, Johannes Weissenbach (conductor). Period SPL-703, \$5.95.

▲THIS comic opera was written by Haydn in 1770 to an Italian text, previously set by Galuppi, Piccini, Paisiello among

others, for performance in the theater at Esterhazy. The present version is an abridged one made in 1932 by the German composer Mark Lothar with German text and the inclusion of added music from other Haydn operas. It is a gay and tuneful opus well presented by a pleasing group of German singers and a competent conductor who provides an animated orchestral background. The reproduction is excellent. I suspect that Germans will acquire the most satisfaction from this recording as the singers put across the lines very well, but the absence of a libretto leaves something to be desired from others, since the synopsis given does not suffice. Moreover, from reports on the original version, Haydn is hardly done full justice to in this abridged version, since his original intention, as Geiringer tells us of "obviously following the tradition of Gluck's reformed operas composed for Vienna, in which descriptive orchestral preludes and ballets were of great importance," is curtailed. Perhaps the Haydn Society, which seems to have by-passed lately its original intentions, might give us a performance of the original version with its many instrumental movements which are praised by biographers.

—J.N.

MOUSSORGSKY: *Songs and Dances of Death*; **DUPARC:** *L'Invitation au voyage; Phidylé; Chanson triste; Extase; Le Manoir de Rosamonde*; George London (baritone) with Paul Ulanowsky at the piano. Columbia ML-4906, \$5.95.

▲**MR. LONDON** is more successful in the Moussorgsky songs (which he sings in Russian) than in the Duparc. In the latter, his production is too heavy-toned and muffled. Few baritones are suited to the floated lyricism of *L'Invitation au voyage* and *Phidylé*, and of those who have sung them on records Panzéra was truly successful. The most satisfactory recordings of these were made by Maggie Teyte, and something should be done about their transfer to LP. Souzay is more successful than London in creating the moods of all these songs, though he is lacking in the ardor of Panzéra. It is to be hoped that

January, 1955

RCA Victor will someday re-release on LP the latter's singing of these and other French songs. The composer wrote all of these for high voice, and neither *Chanson triste* nor *Extase* retain their poetic delicacy when sung by a plangent voice like Mr. London's.

The first of the Moussorgsky songs—*Lullaby*—is definitely a woman's song, and even the second—*Serenade*—seems more suited to a woman as comparison with Jennie Tourel's version (Columbia ML-4289) conveys. Mr. London lacks the artistic ease, if not the assurance, of Miss Tourel in all four songs, though he revives memories of Chaliapin in *Trepak* and *Commander-in-Chief*. These latter are undoubtedly best served by a man's voice. Mr. Ulanowsky is a competent, but somewhat self-effacing artist, especially in comparison to Leonard Bernstein in the Moussorgsky group. Excellent recording is provided singer and accompanist.

—P.H.R.

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MOZART: Masonic Music—Dir, Seele des Weltalls (cantata), K. 429; Die Mauerfreude (cantata), K. 471; Maurerische Trauermusik, K. 477; Rudolf Christ and Erich Majkut (tenors) and Walter Berry (bass) with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and Vienna Chamber Choir conducted by Bernhard Paumgartner. Epic LP LC-3062, \$5.95.

▲THE Vox competitor seems to have dropped out of the catalogues, and the Music-Record version could not be considered a contender on sonic grounds. Both of those were two-disc sets, anyway, so that the economy factor would be a controlling factor even if sound were not. Actually, the artistic qualities of these three of the 12 Masonic works are beyond any but the most carping criticism. Mozart's consuming interest in the Masonic order—a dedication not shared by his 1^o dge brothers, who allowed his corpse to be dropped into an unmarked grave—has prompted more than one philosophically inclined annotator to go off the deep end. To me it seems to have been a simple case of insecurity, against which Masonry's promise of fellowship

provided a balanced antidote of solace and idealism. Whatever his motivations, Mozart wrote some of his most beautiful music under the spell of this exclusive comradeship. The *K. 477*, especially, is as magical a work as he ever set down. None of this music is religious, nor secular, either. Nor was Mozart either, really, so that the *mystique* of Masonry was probably just what he needed to touch his most responsively creative chords. Be that as it may, these are lovely, affecting works in their several ways, and the performances are uniformly fine. Big, resonant sound. —J.L.

Anna Russell's Guide to Concert Audiences, with Eugene Rankin (piano). Columbia LP ML-4928, \$5.95.

▲YOU will buy this disc straightaway if you own either of its predecessors. If you do not know the unique art of La Russell, by all means give it a whirl. This third in a notable series is ostensibly a sort of short course for people who dislike song recitals but have to attend them anyway, like husbands and wives of music lovers and community pillars who must turn up for reasons of protocol. The redoubtable Russell discourses briefly on the *mores* of this unfortunate breed and then launches into illustrated lectures on the various types of musical experience they are apt to encounter: Italian *arie antiche*, German *Lieder*, "sexless" British art song, the music hall ditty ("Vaudeville isn't dead; it's just gone to England"), the *chanson*, Spanish "polite" and Spanish "rude" (*flamenco*), and so forth. In every case she brings down the house—as before, Columbia has made an actual performance recording. The sound is good enough. —J.L.

SONGS: *L'abbandono* (Bellini); *La seduzione*; *Brindisi* (Verdi); *Rosa*; *Alta luna* (Mascagni); *Per pietà*; *Malinconia, ninfa gentile* (Bellini); *Non l'acostare all'urna*; *Perduta ho la pace* (Verdi); *Serenata*; *Ballata* (Mascagni); Patricia Neway (soprano) and Thomas Mayer (piano). Eterna 101, \$5.95.

▲MISS NEWAY must be hailed, at the least, as one of our more enterprising singers. All of these songs are of interest as representing ventures into the field by men identified with opera. It would be pleasant to enthuse over the performances, but it must be admitted that these songs need better controlled and more polished singing to show at their best. In the Mascagni *Serenata* she comes nearer to producing what the music needs, but the voice does not have enough of what we call "line." The recording is generally clear, but approaches overloading in some of the climaxes. —P.L.M.

VERDI ARIAS from *Ballo in Maschera*, *Falstaff*, *Il Trovatore*, *Rigoletto*, *Otello*, *La Traviata*, *Don Carlo*; Robert Weede with Concert Arts Orchestra conducted by Nicholas Rescigno. Capitol P-8279, \$5.95.

▲HERE is an American singer with a fine baritone voice, unctuous and resonant. He knows what he is doing and does it with a forthright artistry that is virile in style. His Italian diction is good and makes much of the words that accent drama but fails to modulate or color his voice where the text deals with sentiment. Yet, he has vocal powers that command attention and sustain the attention of the listener who admires vocal production that is healthy and manly at all times. There are others who bring more subtlety to their art, but not always with the vocal assurance heard here. Capitol has provided wonderfully realistic reproduction and first-rate orchestral accompaniments which serve the baritone advantageously. Though Mr. Weede has long been before the public and sung with leading opera companies, including the Metropolitan, he has made all too few recordings. Since he has many admirers throughout the country, this first LP recital by him may be regarded as a belated blessing. —J.N.

WEBER: *Battle and Victory* (*Kampf und Sieg*)—Cantata, Op. 44; Lisbeth Schmidt-Glaenzel (soprano), Eva Fleischer (contralto), Gert Lutze (ten-

or), Hans Kraemer (baritone), Chorus and Orchestra of Radio Leipzig conducted by Herbert Kegel. Urania LP URLP-7126, \$5.95.

▲BELIEVE it or not, it was this pretentious flim-flam, along with one or two others of the same stamp, that made Weber famous. Today, of course, he is remembered almost exclusively for his operas, or rather the overtures to them, and the charming little *Konzertstueck* for piano and orchestra. These and, of course, the ubiquitous *Invitation to the Dance*. The noisy item at hand was composed in 1815 in the wake of Waterloo. The temper of those times being patriotic in the extreme, it is not impossible to understand how *Kampf und Sieg* made something of a splash for a while. I see no grounds for exhuming it at this late date, however, and this opinion was strengthened considerably when I put it on the turntable a second time. The estimable annotator, Klaus George Roy, rationalizes away the excision of the work's inherent pan-Germanism (meaning any reference to Prussia in the text) most unconvincingly. Quite a turnaround for this purist. The "significance" of the piece, he concludes, actually lies in "what it tells us of the 29-year-old Weber's command over musical materials and structure, rather than in the original time-conditioned purpose of the composition itself." That's like saying that the *Symphonie Fantastique* had nothing to do with the passion Berlioz harbored for Henrietta Smithson. Weber's *Op. 44* was cheap saber-rattling in 1815 and it is yet, entirely notwithstanding the competence it bespeaks. The present performance is as artful as one could reasonably expect, and the Urania sound is quite satisfactory. —J.L.

BIRD VOICES

THE MOCKINGBIRD SINGS. Cornell University Records (124 Roberts Place, Ithaca, N. Y.) 10", 78 rpm. \$2.50.

MUSIC AND BIRD SONGS; Sounds of Nature, with Commentary and Analysis. January, 1955

sis. Cornell University Records, 10", LP, \$5.00.

AMERICAN BIRD SONGS, Vol. 2. Cornell University Records, 12", LP, \$7.75.

▲NO ONE who is fascinated with the sounds of nature could fail to be interested in the Cornell University Records outputs in this field. If the most fascinating of these discs for me remains the "The Mockingbird Sings," it is because I was brought up in my early years in the South and had a treasured pet—a mocking bird, who imitated anything and everything. What a versatile creature that feathered friend is! On this record we hear the mockingbird's own song and his imitations of 30 other birds. What a perfect mimicker he is! My only wish was that he had imitated the song of a nightingale.

"Music and Bird Songs" is narrated by the well known radio commentator, James Fassett, who originally presented this recorded program in 1952 on the CBS "Invitation to Music." There are sixteen birds heard singing in their natural habitats, beginning with the mockingbird, the winter wren, common loon and including meadowlarks, thrushes and four different "songs" of frogs. By changing the speeds of one or two bird songs, clarification of the style as well as rhythm of the bird is made. This is a fascinating program, which some will recall hearing on the radio.

The "American Bird Songs" is as equally alluring as the first which Cornell issued. In each band, we hear several different birds in a specific category or location. Thus Bands 1 and 2 presents Some Familiar Birds of Gardens and Shade Trees; Bands 3 and 4—Some Familiar Birds of the Roadside; Bands 5 and 6—Some Birds of the Lakes and Marshes; Bands 7 and 8—More Birds of the Marshes; and Bands 9 and 10—Some North American Warblers. All the birds were recorded in their natural haunts in varying sections throughout our country, which lends a natural atmosphere to the recordings. If you've never invaded the wild haunts of our feathered

friends, you will hear many bird voices whose musical notes have an attraction that familiarity will never diminish.

—P.H.R.

INSTRUMENTS

THE TRUMPET, Vol. I—SABARICH:

Lamento, Aubade; **THILDE:** *Sicilienne et Tambourin, Serenade Fantasque*; **HABEAU:** *Sonate*; Raymond Sabarich and Louis Menardi (trumpets) with Marthe Lenom (Piano). London 10" LP LS 988, \$4.95.

▲THE TRUMPET is the only brass instrument with which the French have made any sort of international mark. The most sought-after instruments (not the brand which this record promotes) come from France. The Boston Symphony of the twenties and thirties, when it was the glory of the land, always imported the finest European instrumentalists. They went to Germany for horns and trombones, to France for flutes, clarinets, oboes and trumpets. These fellows are very good, particularly Menardi, and, surprisingly enough, the piece by Jean Hubau, a young (36) composer of conservative tendencies, has much more to recommend it than the usual piece of this type. Give it a try, you trumpet players, in spite of the fact that the main theme of the finale is decidedly similar to a popular American show-tune. Recording is excellent. —A.W.P.

THE TROMBONE: Vol. I—BAUDO:

Petite Suite; **DEFAY:** *Danse Sacrée*; **MASSIS:** *Suite pour quatre Trombones*; **DONDAYNE:** *Quatuor de Trombones*; G. Masson, M. Galliegues, A. Gosset, R. Allain (Trombones) with piano accompaniment. London 10" LP LS 989, \$4.95.

▲THE FRENCH ideal in trombone tone is considerably different from the norm adopted here. They feature a more liquid style, with very wide vibrato. The sound is considerably coarser and brighter than ours. I wouldn't be surprised if they use instruments of smaller

bore than our players, whose tradition stems either from Germany or Italy, where the brass playing has always been outstanding for its fine mellow quality and its ability to blend with the rest of the orchestra. I can find little reason for releasing this disc in the U. S., except possibly as a curiosity comparison item. The pieces, again of the conservatory trial type, are of no consequence, and the performers' style is quite different from that required by our major orchestras.

—A.W.P.

VIOLIN LESSON

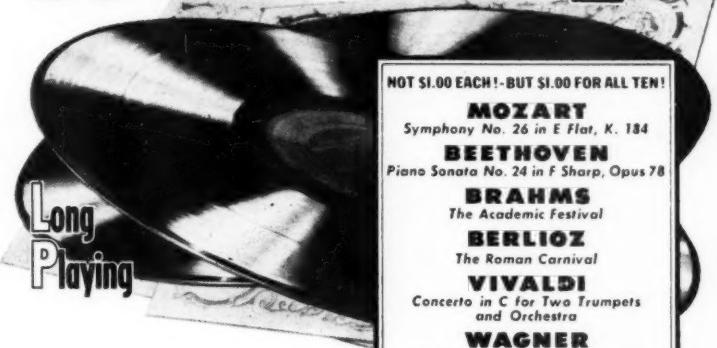
VIOTTI: *Violin Concerto No. 23 in G*; Jan Shermont (violin) and Otto Schulhoff (piano). Remington YV-1 ("Young Violinist's Editions, Series I, Volume I"), \$5.95.

▲THE price of this disc, fancily packaged in pliofilm, includes the parts of the Viotti edited, fingered and supplemented with special preparatory exercises by Theodore and Alice Pashkus. Not being a string man myself, I can only testify that the Pashkus influence in contemporary fiddling is considerable; Ossy Renardy was one of his products and none less than Yehudi Menuhin has adopted his method. That method is revealed in the elaborate accompanying exercises. Young aspirants should not go into it without consulting their own teachers, needless to say, or they risk whatever progress they might have made. In all cases the teacher himself should be the judge. Why do you suppose the Pashkuses chose the *Viotti No. 23*, when the *No. 22* is so much more universally known? No matter. Subsequent issues will include the Raff *Cavatina*, the Wieniawski *Kuyawiak*, the *Ballade* and *Polonaise* of Vieuxtemps and concerti by Rode, De Beriot and Kreutzer among others. The present performance is extremely good; the reverse side is given over to the piano accompaniment for the student's performance, with the solo violin heard ever so faintly in the distance just in case the student loses his place. Teachers, as well as students, may find this disc useful.

—J.L.

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